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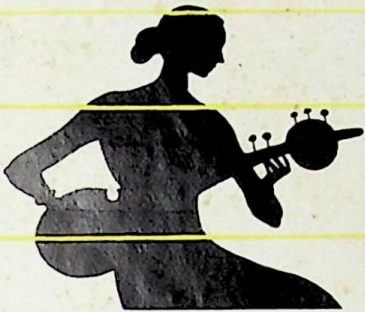
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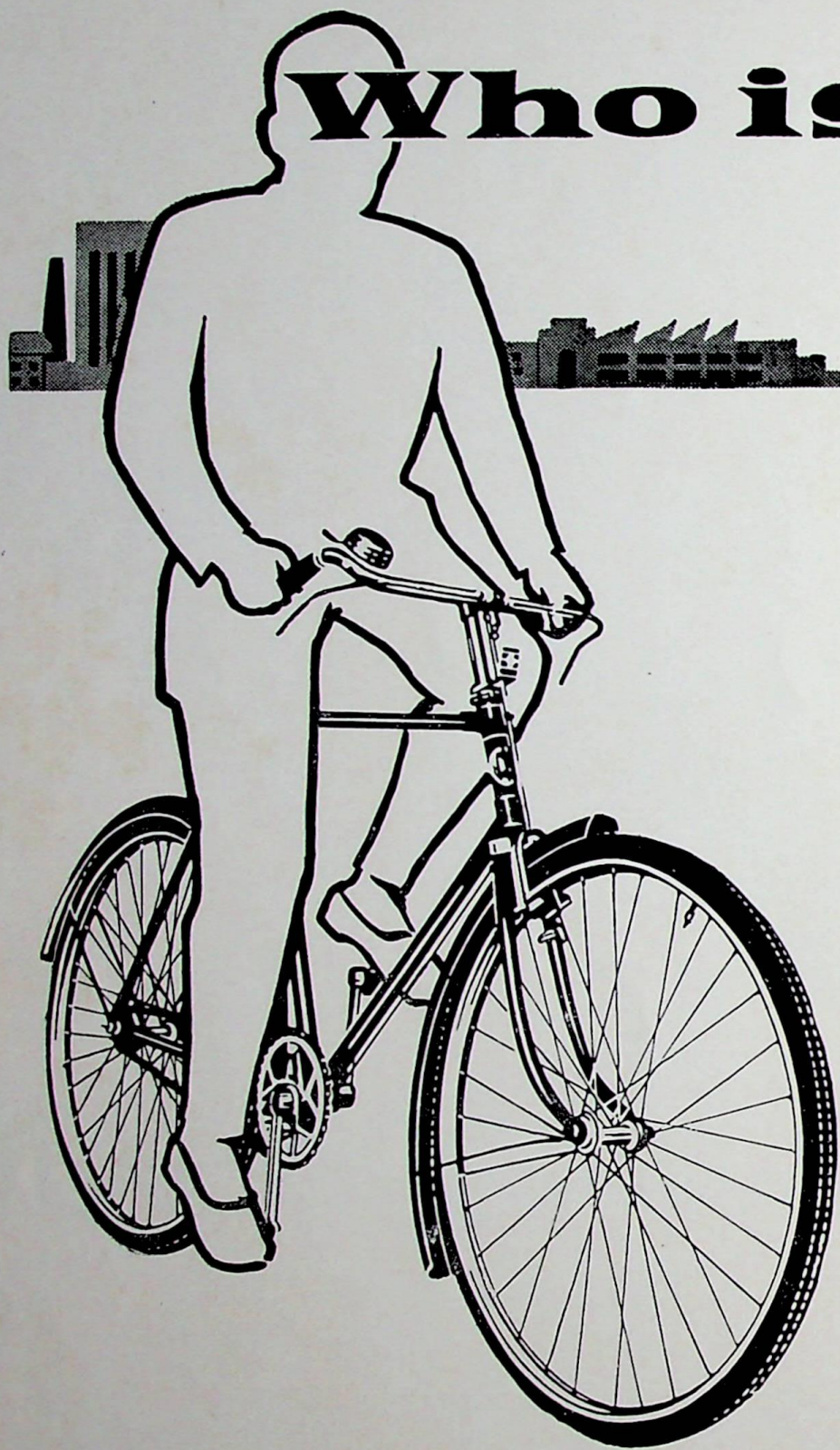
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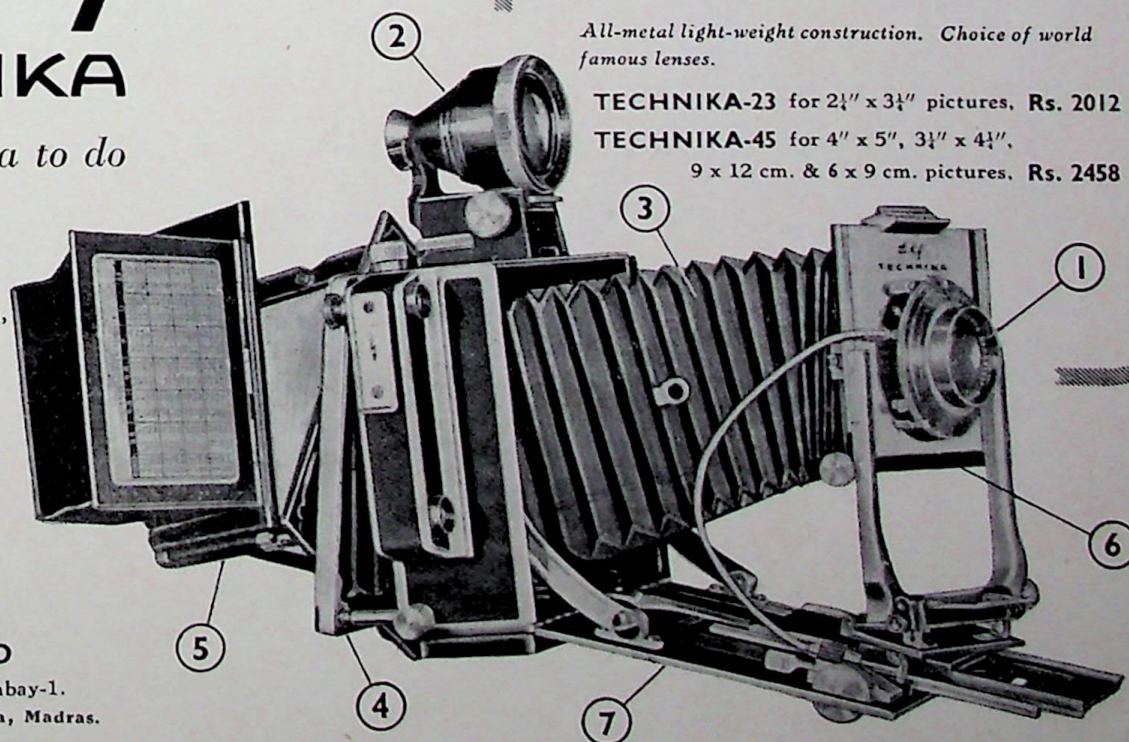
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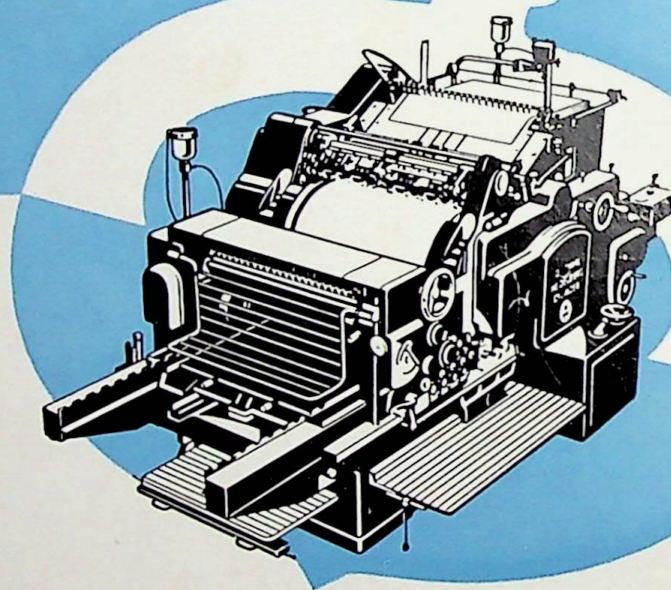
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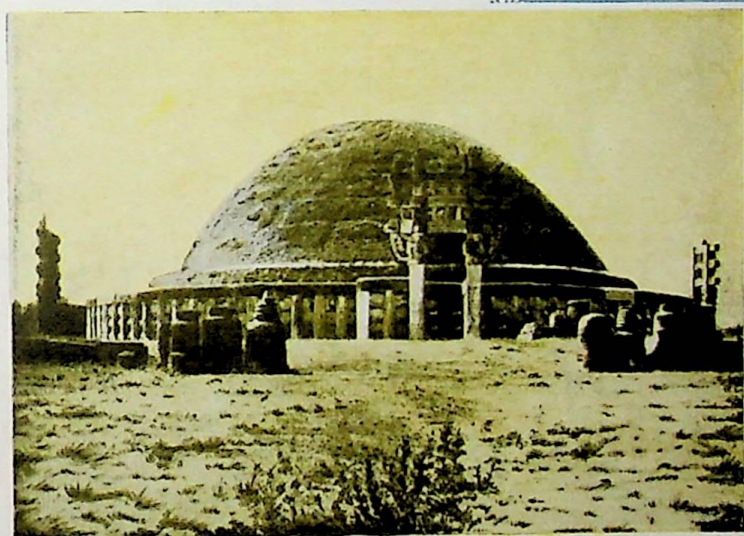
Garden of Fountains, Udaipur.



Tower of Victory, Chitorgarh.



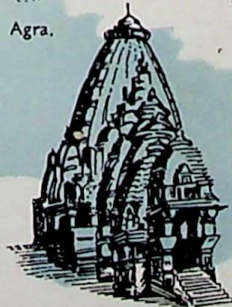
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VOLUME IX

DECEMBER 1955

NUMBER 1.

EDITORIAL:

IN PRAISE OF EARLY BUDDHIST ART

THE CONTINUITY OF
TRADITION: Portfolio

GLIMPSES OF BUDDHIST INDIA:
by T. W. Rhys Davids

EVOLUTION OF BUDDHIST
ARCHITECTURE & SCULPTURE
IN THE TIME OF SATAVAHANAS:
by Krishna Gairola

1. PRELIMINARY:
HISTORICAL NOTE

2. ARCHITECTURE:
Sanchi, Bhaja, Kondane, Bedsa,
Ajanta, Nasik, Karle, Kanheri,
Amaravati

3. SCULPTURE:
Bhaja, Kondane, Bedsa, Karle,
Kanheri, Sanchi, Ajanta, Amaravati.
(Appendix)

PAINTING: THE CHARM
OF AJANTA:
by S. L.

FRESCOES OF AJANTA:
AN ESSAY:
by C. L. Fabri

SOME MOTIFS FROM
ANCIENT INDIAN JEWELLERY:

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*Cover: Mithuna (Male and Female) Figures from
Karle Chaitya Facade app. 1st. Century A.D.*

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IN PRAISE OF EA

Marg wishes in this special number to recall to the minds of our countrymen certain images of Buddhist art as part of our humble offering towards this year's celebrations of the anniversary of the birth of Gautama, the Buddha.

It is a matter of pride and satisfaction, that the Government of India has actively associated itself, and the people of this country, with this anniversary after hundreds of years of neglect of the life and teachings of one of the greatest teachers of mankind, a sage who was perhaps, the earliest revolutionary thinker of the world and certainly the first great humanist who raised the lowly and the fallen to the pedestal of equality and forever placed the essential dignity of man, the saving grace in us all, on the altar of worship.

The message of the "Enlightened One" is of particular importance to us and indeed to the whole of mankind today. For the shifting of the emphasis from the residuum of sanity in man to those elements in his nature which survive from his pre-historic past, such as aggressiveness and greed, have often led human civilisation astray and exacted the toll of millions of lives and incalculable ruin during the two bloody wars fought in one generation. Furthermore, the exaltation of violence and cruelty between man and man, as part of the doctrine of the unchangeability of "human nature" (human being considered in the view of some to be totally evil), has put the known and the unknown universes in such jeopardy through the prospect of a new global conflict, for which preparations are being made with the most terrible atomic weapons of mass destruction, that the words of the Buddha may be remembered even more aptly:

"On destroying craving, egoism, the two extreme heresies with the tigers of obstruction as the fifth, a Bhikku, who has shut out evil thoughts, becomes free from suffering." (Verse 295).

"Hatreds never cease by hatred in this world: by love alone they cease. This is an ancient law." (Verse 5).



RLY BUDDHIST ART

"Though one should conquer a thousand men in the battlefield, yet he, indeed, is the noblest victor who should conquer himself." (Verse 103).

"All tremble at punishment. All fear death; comparing others with oneself, one should neither kill nor cause to kill." (Verse 129).

"All tremble at punishment, Life is dear to all; comparing others with oneself, one should neither kill nor cause to kill." (Verse 130).

"Ah, happily we live without hate amongst the hateful; amidst hateful men we dwell unhating." (Verse 197).

"Victory breeds hatred; the defeated live in pain: Happily the peaceful live, giving up victory and defeat." (Verse 201).

Fortunately, such words as these from the Dhammapada were also uttered again and again in our country by the last apostle of non-violence, Mahatma Gandhi. And, by and large, our countrymen are convinced of the need for the renunciation of war as a weapon for solving international disputes, and, aided by the warning of the great scientists about the possible destruction of the whole of human civilisation if a new war is unleashed, the sanction of the residuum of sanity may prevail.

Meanwhile, for our own country and the world, we must insist on certain truths of the age when the Buddha's doctrine flourished, to possess ourselves of the confidence necessary to build anew our much battered civilisation, and to live creatively.

The chief impression which emerges from even a cursory survey of the monuments of Buddhist Art is that the people began, through the Buddha's teachings, actively to share a number of values and join together in embodying what they knew, or experimented with, thus evidencing a creativeness which is only matched in our history with the heightened processes of the Hindu mediaeval renaissance that lapsed almost altogether after the eighteenth century on receiving the impact of the alien European civilisation.

We need not analyse here all those factors which led to the decay of our

creativeness, but we can see clearly that whenever participation of the many peoples of India in the dedication to a common belief, or set of beliefs, is not evident, our history is on the decline. The unity of the diverse strands of our culture, based on the acknowledgement of variety, constitutes our strength.

In this sense, the vitality of Buddhist Art springs, as Ananda Coomaraswamy has told us, from the pooled resources of the laity and not from the impositions of the monks or the upper orders.

And, from this point of view, the arbitrary European distinction between the Classical and the Folk Arts breaks down in its application to the arts of our country. In India the so called classical books, the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* have been sung by the masses, and, though the giant pillar edicts and other creations of the Mauryan Empire owed themselves to the Hellenistic and Achamaneid preferences of Ashoka, there were folk elements even in these classical works. (Perhaps what seems to many contemporary European scholars to be the higher excellence of the values and forms even of the classical art of Greece and Rome, as against the later romantic nonsense, may actually be the excellence of an art which was not intended to be classical, that is to say, inspired by the genius for order of an upper order of priests or lords, but may have been, in fact, mostly the excellence of an art created by, and shared with, the populace). Certainly Indian art, after the disappearance of the Maurya order, and in the emergence of the linear and folk rhythms in the works under the Sunga dynasty, at Barhut and Sanchi, shows the predominance of folk feeling.

At any rate, as is obvious from the essay of Professor T. W. Rhys Davids, reproduced later, the participation of the people in building up the symbols, the viharas and the monasteries, associated with Buddhist art, is real. And though the works may be religious in content, and accord even with a canon, the delight in workmanship dominates the artisan and the understanding of life imbued with secular habit, is passed on from generation to generation.

Undoubtedly, the impulse of dedication may take its example from the conversion to the faith of an upper order, constituted by the local raja or his courtiers, and shop-keepers, as is evident from the series of sculptures and rock cut temples carved out under the Satavahanas from the Deccan to Central India. But, as the king or the nobleman, did not own the land as their private property, and only had certain rights in land, that is to say they collected revenue in lieu of the defence they provided or the canals and tracks they kept in

good repair, they were socially, not intrinsically superior to the villagers, who also had adequate rights in land and on the grazing grounds and forest lands around the little village republics. The division of labour tended to determine the caste system. And in this set-up the craftsmen, or the *Shilpins* were common people, whose excellence resided in their skill; "One who knows amiss his craft...after his death will fall into hell and suffer." (*Mayamataya*).

There were many changes in the attitude towards creative works in the later history of India, during which the emphasis on religion brought the subservience of the craftsmen to the doctrinaire thesis of the codes laid down by the priestcraft. Inevitably, there were, therefore, periods of decadence in the arts, though the psychology of ritualistic worship was throughout well understood by the clergy and the need to gather mass support for a particular faith kept the dogmas at bay, making for concreteness of imagery even where the truths of religion to be illustrated were abstract.

The trends of Buddhist art, treated in the following pages, thus display a vitality which is symptomatic, not only of the simpler needs of the men of the then new faith of Buddhism, but indicate their kinship with an earlier indigenous tradition of folk painting in flat, by the absorption, perhaps, of the three-dimensional technique that came from outside into the Maurya Court art—a compromise which is more like a revision of the original hypothesis under the alien influence.

This view of mine is confirmed by Professor Nihar Ranjan Roy when he says of the early artists of Barhut:

"For instance, when they show in entirety figures and objects that ought optically to have been presented hidden or partly covered, or when they present an object in small or large proportions not as they optically appear to us but in accordance with the meaning of the relation into which they enter with other figures of the story, or when they tilt the relief to show objects in entirety, or extend the volume of an object or its part not into depth but on the surface, they follow essentially the methods of the primitive folk tradition of India that has come down to our present day in the shape and form of 'Pata-Chityas'."

The emergence of men and women as part of the process of nature, in the Sunga art, after the absence of the human figure in the more abstract, orderly and exalted design of Maurya times, further emphasises the reversion towards popular feeling of the native tradition.

It is not intended to create any prejudices here against foreign incursions. But, reaffirming one's faith

in the composite nature of India's artistic heritage. I wish at the same time to suggest that the basic residuum of the native Indian tradition had already evolved a rich storehouse of vital, concrete, anthropomorphic imagery, in wood if not in stone, through the more potent Dravidian mother source of energy, in which tree spirits and snakes, creepers and human beings, all mingle together in a linear rhythm and this residuum was affected to an extent, or began to run parallel with 'the other trend,' noticed by Dr. Stella Kramrisch, of the schematic manner of vertical and horizontal lines and three-dimensional extensiveness, illustrated in the so called Ajatastru Pillar showing the miracle of Sravasti, the preaching of "Abhidharma" in the Tushita heaven, the Buddha's descent from Tushita heaven by a ladder, and on the gateway of the Sanchi Stupa number 1. The fusion of the two strains, the fertile and exuberant native tradition of myriads of imaginative forms and the rhythmic logic and balance of the incoming Nordics, brought about that high level of craftsmanship which already characterises the dramatic Buddhist art, from the earliest panels of Barhut and Sanchi, through the reliefs and sculptures of Bhaja, Karle, Bedsa, Kondane and Ajanta to Amaravati.

The inexhaustible onrush of multitudinous forms that began, after the lapse of the Maurya abstract phase, travelled in two main directions, in the service of the Buddhist faith.

On the one hand, it spread from Barhut which is about a hundred miles south of Prayng along the northern caravan route, through the valley of Mahiyar, leading via Ujjain and Bhilsa to Patna, the ancient Pataliputra, to Sarnath, Rajgir, Nalanda and Bodh-Gaya. (We propose to treat the monuments of this part of Buddhist art in a later number of Marg).

On the other hand, the tradition percolated through the kingdom of the Satavahanas, who had embraced Buddhism, and stretched their realms from Andhra Desa through the Deccan to the Western Ghats and up to Madhya Bharat. The earliest gateways of the stupas at Sanchi were constructed under their aegis, about the first century B.C. and so did the monasteries of the Western Ghats, as well as the earliest cave temples of the Deccan, including caves number IX and X at Ajanta, and the first panels of Amaravati in Andhra, all begin to be cut out of rocks under them. It is not remarkable that the power of the Satavahanas spread from the Bay of Bengal across the trade routes from the Deccan through the west coast to middle India, and the monasteries probably sponsored by the local Buddhist Samghas, and their richer donors, served

both as pilgrim shrines and resting places for the itinerant travellers on the ancient tracks, not only from innermost India, but from Arabia, Iran and Rome through the coastal sea routes.

The architects 'Tachhakas' the sculptures, 'Vaddhakis' the painters 'Thapatis' and the carpenters 'Pashana-Koltakas' were, at that time, all organised into traditional guilds, mostly derived from the Dravidian stock, amenable to the tastes of the well-to-do patrons but unmistakably folk in their inspiration, evidencing a love of life as lived by the people through their pagan dances, music and the sensuous, colourful processions during the garland of festivals that surrounded the year, a love of revelry only held back at the highest climaxes by the awareness, instinct in the teachings of the Buddha, that the Universe is, in the ultimate analysis, phenomenal, and that the greatest and the most delicate pleasures of the body are but evanescent.

Along with Sunga art of middle and eastern India, of the hundred or so years of the pre-Christian era and a century or two after Christ, the monumental carvings and reliefs of the Satavahanas constitute one of the most significant phases of the first genuinely national art tradition of India, in which all the local forms and idioms having merged with the Mauryan motifs, derived from West Asiatic influences, flowered out into a fully integrated accent of the native creative genius, surpassing the accomplishments of many mature peoples of the world of that time and certainly comparable, in their range and execution with the greatest works of Greece and Rome.

If there is a lesson to be learnt from these reliefs and sculptures and ambitious architectures, it is in the uncanny mastery of the knowledge of human life and the organisation of its forms into giant works, which show the noble civilisation which the peoples of this country evolved so early. And this may naturally fill our talented people with the confidence that there is nothing outside the orbit of our achievement if only we can attain the belief in ourselves and in over-riding social ideals, worthy of the participation of our whole old-new nation, even as Buddhism was during the era which saw the refulgence of the Satavahana art. The whole rich, varied and intricate life in which the gods of the exalted pantheon, Surya and Laxmi and Indra, mingle freely with the languorous apsaras and the tribal 'Tree spirits' Yakshas and Yakshinis, Nagas and Naganis, Kinnaras and sensuous Bhangas afford us glimpses not only of a style which is instinct with the deepest sense of reality and truth in life, but projects our awareness into the

realisation that if our people wish to bring about a reorganisation of the raw materials of life, they can, together, under the new conditions of modern life, assimilate the technical influences of the outside world and unfold themselves in a tradition, born of the flesh

and blood of our human struggle, in our own tongues, and in the particularly skilful accents of our own hands, manipulating beautiful new machines, perfecting machine tools and implements of atomic power, the contemporary equivalents of the grandeur of the past.



Buddhapada: Early Phase



Lomas Rishi Cave: Barabar

The Continuity of Tradition

If there are any available links, which prove the continuity of the tradition from the earliest known art of India, in Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa, to the next known documents, then these are supplied by certain symbols which recur again and again in the later periods.

The pioneer critic of Indian Art, Ananda Coomaraswamy, began, after his manifold researches in the history of ancient Indian Art, to believe that the continuity was sustained through the role played by the original neolithic inhabitants of India, the Dravidians, in carrying on the styles of narrative art, in spite of the conquests and reconquests at the top, at first by the Aryan invaders and then by those successive waves of Greeks, Kushans and Huns, which came into India during the thousand or so years before Christ.

In a study of the Tree of Life, the Earth Lotus, the World Wheel, the Lotus Throne and the Fiery Pillar, Coomaraswamy tries to show the existence of these symbols, through the aniconic period of the Brahminical Vedas, including the Rigvedic period, long before their representation in Buddhist iconography.

As some of these symbols are already present in Mohenjo-Daro, it seems fairly certain that a universal Indian symbolism was developing for a long time in the prehistoric periods.

In this context, it must be emphasised that the known art of India does not spring up suddenly, but had its prototypes in wood and ivory long before the discovered monuments became available.

As most of these monuments seem to be inspired by the Buddhist faith, and also constitute

the beginning of the known art of India, they have a special significance for us in any consideration of our heritage, and in proving the continuity of our tradition.

The approximate date of the earliest finds seems to be uncertain, but after the edicts of Ashoka, and the carvings which surmounted them, have been disposed of as art of the classical style, superimposed by a monarch of international affiliations and outlook, on his empire, the inner tradition of Buddhist-Indian Art reappears with a set of well-developed symbols in Barhut, Sanchi, and other Buddhist shrines.

We reproduce here, a small sketch of a gold repousse figure found in the mound at Lauria-Nandangarh, which is one of the objects discovered, under reliable circumstances of excavation, that can be certainly accepted as the work of the pre-Maurya period. Presumably it represents the earth goddess 'Prithvi', and she may be the divinity addressed in the burial in the Rig Veda: 'Go to thy mother, this earth, the widely extending, very gracious Prithvi. That maiden soft as wool to the pious, may protect thee from the abode of destruction'.

Of course, the mother goddess was common to all the ancient eastern civilisation, including the Mediterranean. But in the configuration shown here, she has antecedents in the terracotta figures of the Indus period, as well as the Adities of the Kushan and later periods. Undoubtedly, therefore, the evidence of the continuity of the iconographic tradition, beginning with the Indus valley civilisation, and its gradual development in the hands of Indian artisans of the later historical periods, becomes clearer.

This is not to say that there is not a historical interregnum between the Indus valley and the later ages, because the art of town-planning and stone-carving were certainly lost for centuries, but the persistence of traditional forms in the remains of the Vedic and Pre-Maurya periods, evidences to the creativeness of the indigenous peoples. The depth and the vitality of the epic literature, and the essential source of its many myths and legends lies in crisis; and this shows the high degree of awareness of the technique of writing, apart even from the profound and boldly searching metaphysical content. May these forms have not been accompanied by a wealth of plastic art? Otherwise the fabulous city of Pataliputra would certainly not have been possible. Megasthenes, the Greek traveller, tells of five hundred and sixty towers and sixty four gateways in the circuit of the city walls. Describing the wonders of Pataliputra, Aelian, borrowing from Megasthenes, says: 'In the Indian royal palace...there are wonders with which neither Memnonian Susa in all its glory, nor Ecbatana with all its magnificence, can hope to vie. In the parks tame peacocks are kept, and pheasants which have been domesticated; and cultivated plants... and shady groves and pastures planted with trees, and tree-branches which the art of the woodman has deftly interwoven. There are also tanks of great beauty in which they keep fish of enormous size but quite tame.'

This description finds parallels in certain relief sculptures of the Satavahana period at Sanchi, particularly in the panel on the eastern gateway representing the Buddha's return to Kapilavastu. The actual portal in the city walls is shown here with a simple torana, like the one constructed in stone at Sanchi, and the excavations at Pataliputra have revealed that it was surrounded by a massive palisade of teak beams, held together by iron dowels, making a girdle of fortifications of extraordinary craftsmanship and permanence. Again, the audience hall in Ashoka's palace must have been of a magnificence equal to, if not more exalted than, in the palaces of Xerxes and Darius.

The influence of the Achaemenids may have percolated into Pataliputra, but the craftsmanship in the capital, and more definitely of the habitation which the Emperor Ashoka built for the Ajivika set of Buddhists in the Barabar Hills, near Gaya, the most important of which is the Lomas-Rishi Cave, is certainly the work of native hands. And, in spite of the borrowed ideas which went to the elaboration of Ashoka's pillars, the workmanship in such a column as that set up at Laurya-Nandargarh in Nepal, in 243 B.C. is symptomatic of

those fine qualities which had come to be associated with native craftsmen.

These indigenous elements do not, however, appear so pronouncedly in the classical art of the Ashokan period as when they emerge in Barhut under the Sunga dynasty (185-72 B.C.) which began by being the contemporary of the Satavahanas in the Deccan, Western and Central India.

Among the remnants of the railings and gateways from Barhut, we can see imitations, in stone, of the wooden portals of early Indian towns, and also carved reliefs which are mainly decorations on the railings or fences. The Yakshas and the Yakshis (tree spirits), who appear here are pronouncedly Dravidian, but the nature spirits of the neolithic peoples were humanized by their incorporation into the Buddhist faith, for, until then, the Dravidian spirits are of the earth earthy, huge monoliths, evidencing to a concrete rural imagination, fertile but rooted in the actual sense of the vast landscapes. Later they are also absorbed by the most accomplished carvers into medallions with floral motifs and human figures, dramatically rendering the Jataka stories associated with the life of the Buddha.

These reliefs form part of a tradition of narrative art which is two-dimensional, and in which everything merges into everything else, without beginning and without end, like the typical Indian ocean of story, in which all the anthropomorphic elements of Indian civilisation appear again and again, naive, but dynamic, 'a world of no time and no place where anything can happen as in dreams'.

These carvings adapted from the wood-carver's or the ivory-carver's technique, go through to the early Sanchi stupas, erected under the Satavahanas, to the two marvellous reliefs in the vihara at Bhaja and other rock cut reliefs of western India and the Deccan, and to the carving from the stupa at Jaggayyapeta near Amaravati, on the Kistna, which is itself an equivalent of the sand-stone panels of Satavahana Sanchi.

Underneath the upper layers of the court art of the Imperial Mauryas, the Sungas and the Satavahanas, a feeling for plastic beauty emerges for nearly a thousand years, which is reminiscent of the rich sensibility of the Indian people of that time, fertile and yet finely chiselled, almost the counterpart of the then prevailing Indian view of the universe as phenomena, 'replete with formless, fine matter, of which all living forms are concretions and transformations'.

M. R. A.



Nandipaam: from Padana



The deity seated cross-legged (3000 B.C. Mohenjo-daro) as in the later iconography is three-faced, and has been identified, probably rightly, with Siva. He has a three-pointed, Trisula-like head-dress.



The cult of the deity (Yaksa?), (3000 B.C. Mohenjo-Daro) of the pippalas (Ficus religiosa, the Bodhi-tree of Buddhism) is represented. The deity wears a three-pointed 'Trisula' symbol of the Vedic conception of Agni as Vanaspati, and as latent or nascent in vegetation.

PORTFOLIO



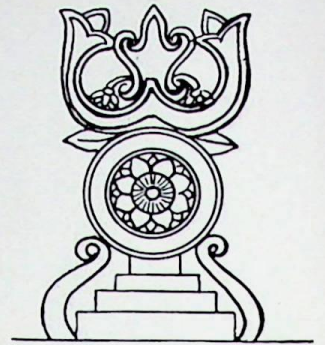
Dharmacakra



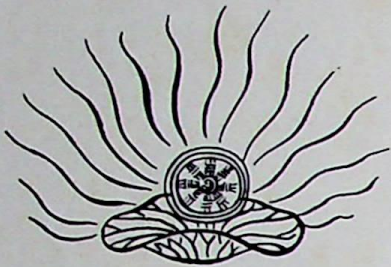
Part of the inner face of the North Torana, Sanchi, Early 1st Century B.C.



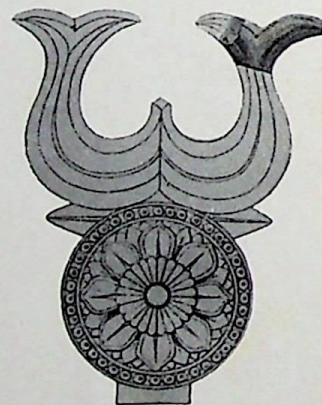
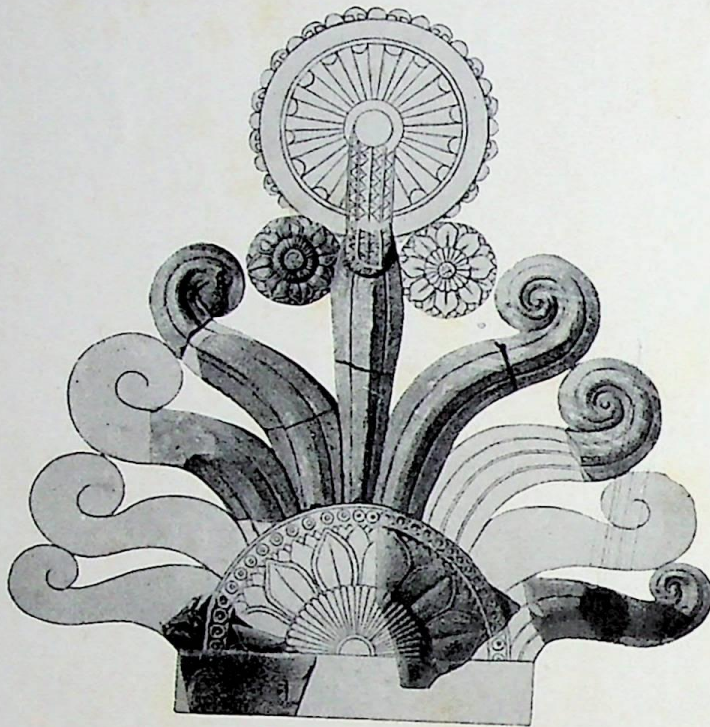
Rimbo: (Dharmacakra), supported by the lotus, after Omura Seigai, Sanbon Ryobu Mandara



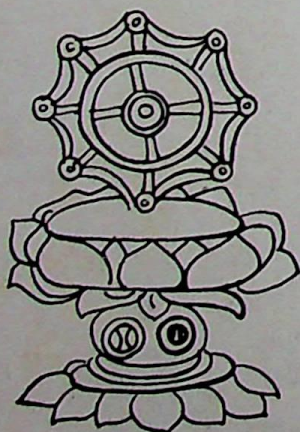
Trisula Symbol from Sanchi



Rimbo: (Dharmacakra), supported by a lotus leaf. After Omura Seigai, Sanbon Ryobu Mandara



Barhut: Pinnacles restored from Existing Fragments



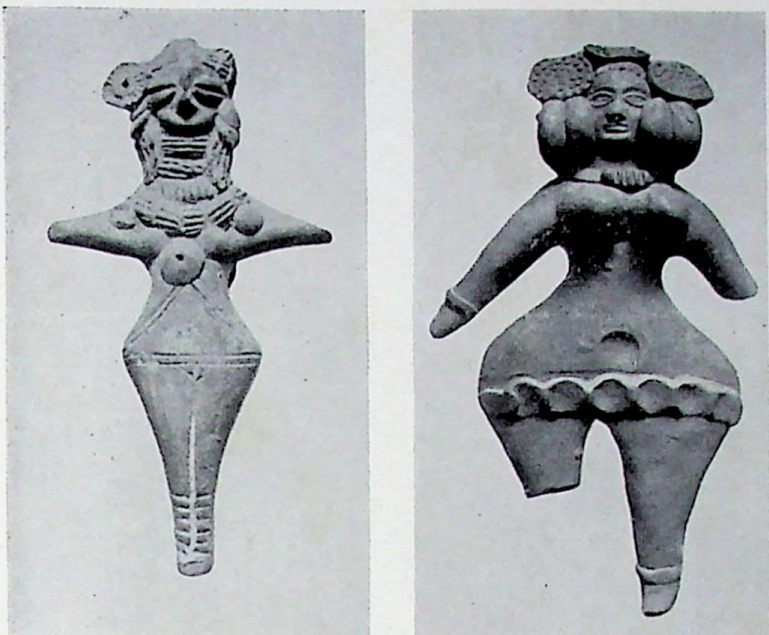
Dharmacakra, detail from a banner, from Tun Huang



Buddhist Trisula from Amaravati



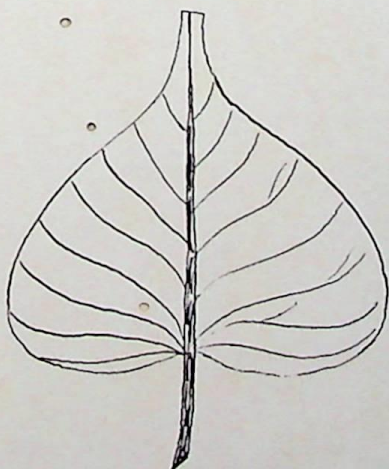
Birth of Brahma: Ellora



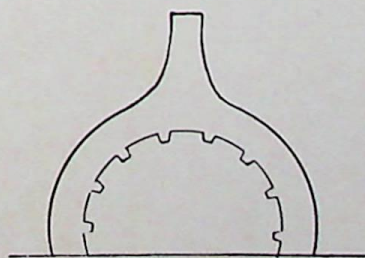
Terracotta Statuettes from Sari Dheri, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston



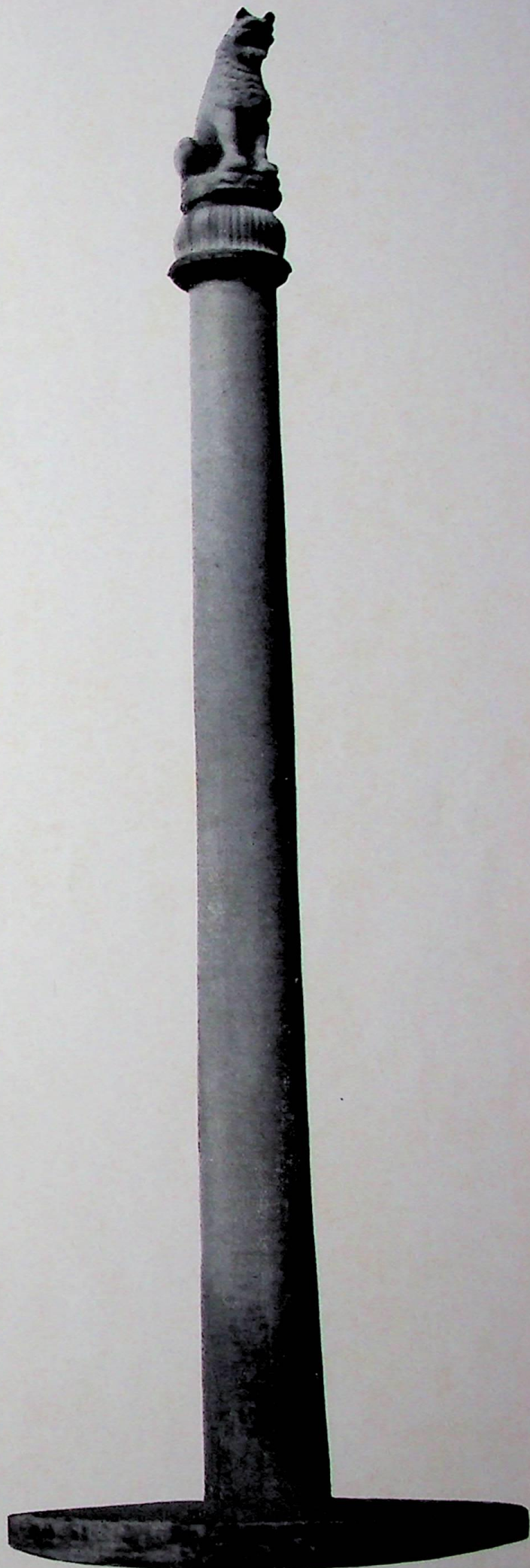
Gold plaque from Lauriya-Nandangarh



Leaf of the Pipal or sacred Bodhi or Bo Tree



Outline of Pipal leaf. Rising Sun. Typical Chaitya or Sun Window



Ashoka Column: Lauriya-Nandangarh



*Parkham Statue,
now Mathura Museum.
About 200 B.C.*



Yaksa Figure, Sand-
stone, Patna, Bihar;
now National Museum
of India, New Delhi,
About 200 B.C.



Batanmara Yakshi: Barhut



Culakoka Devata: Barhut



Cakravaka Naga: Barhut



Kubera Yaksha: Barhut



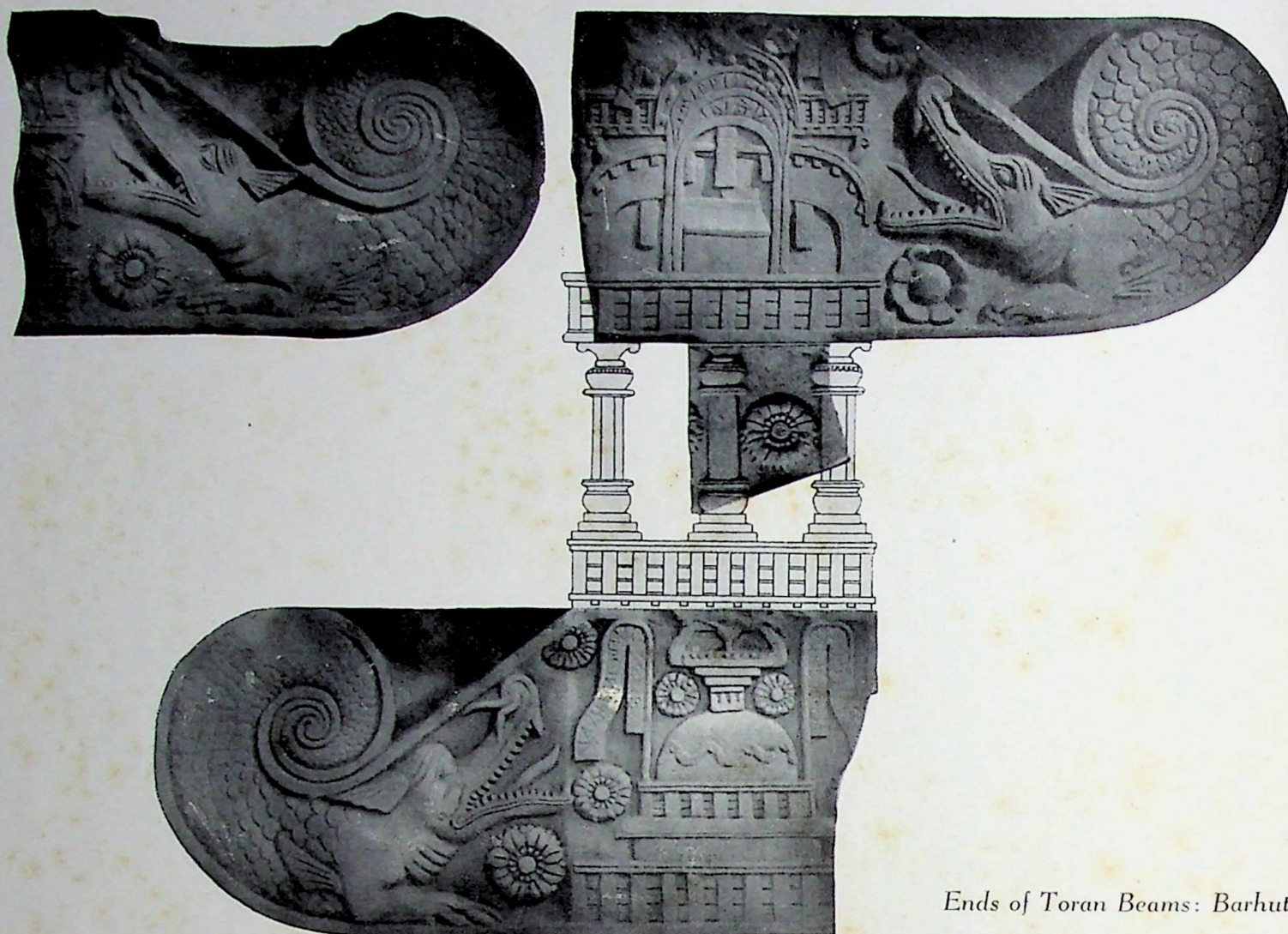
Candra Yakshi: Barhut



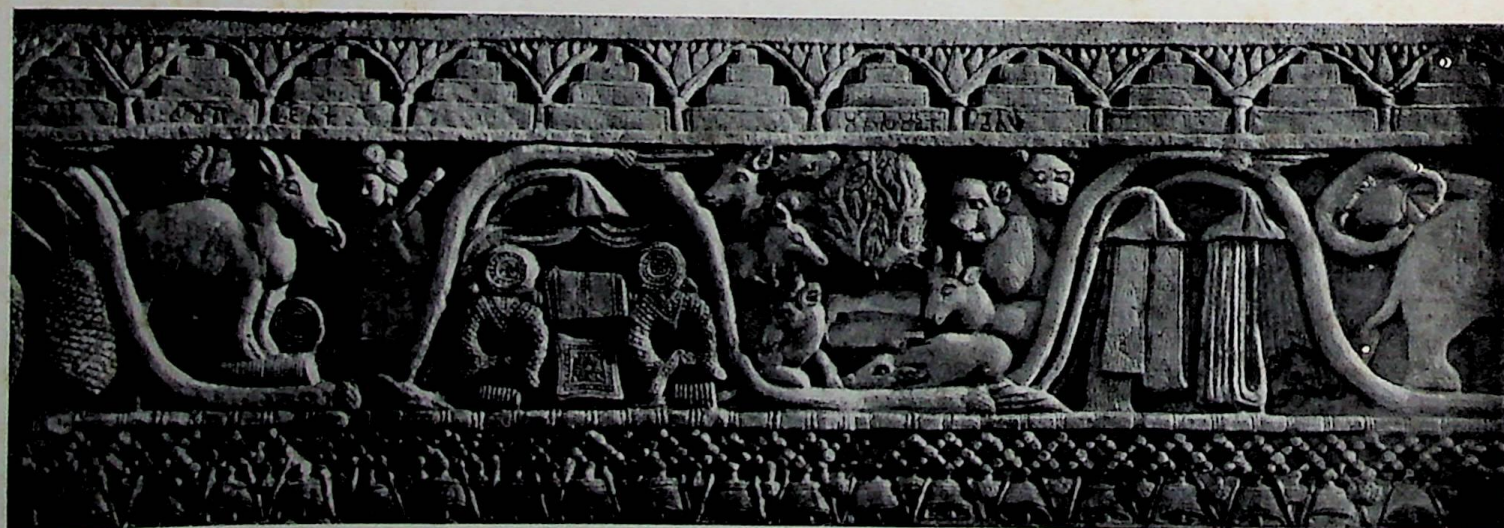
*Didarganj: Chowry Bearer,
1st. Century A.D.*



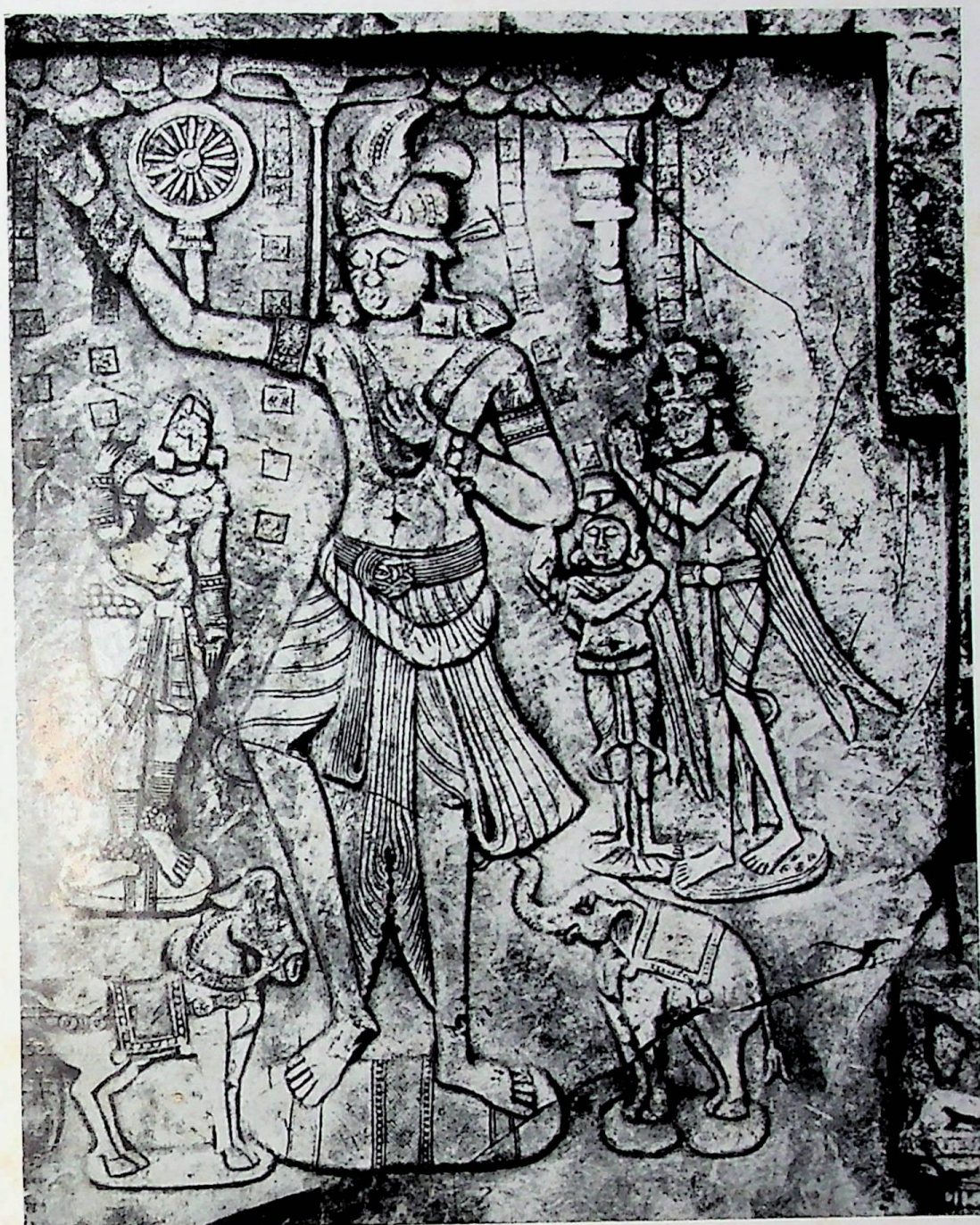
• *Yaksi Torso from Sanchi.
1st Century B.C.*



Ends of Toran Beams: Barhut



Relief from Barhut



*Jaggayyapeta: The Stupa
Panel. The Universal
King. 1st Century B. C.*



*Mriga Jataka, roundel of railing
pillar, Barhut*



Sanchi: Medallion, Stupa 2

Glimpses of Buddhist India

by

T. W. Rhys Davids

In the Buddha's time and in that portion of North India where the Buddhist influence was not early felt—that is to say in the districts including and adjoining those now called the United Provinces and Bihar—the social conditions were on the whole, simple. But there are several points of great interest on which they differed from those of the same districts now and from those of related tribes in Europe then.

Divergent theories have been propounded to explain these differences. The influence of food and climate is assigned a paramount importance. Vegetarian diet is supposed to explain the physical and mental degeneracy proved by the presumed absence of political movements and ardent patriotism. Or the enervating and tropical heat of the sultry plains is supposed to explain at once the want of political vigour and the bad philosophy. Or the overwhelming mental effect of the mighty powers of nature—the vivid storms of thunder and lightning, the irresistible rays of the scorching sun, the depressing majesty of the great mountains—are called upon as a sufficient explanation for the inferiority of the Indian peoples. At the contact with the aboriginal tribes in a semi-savage state of development, the frequent intermarriages, and the consequent adoption of foolish and harmful superstitions, are put forward as the reasons for whatever we find strange in their life and thought.

It may be doubted whether our knowledge of the state of things in the seventh century B.C., either on the

shores of the Mediterranean on the one hand, or in the Ganges Valley on the other, is sufficiently clear and precise to justify our taking for granted the then inferiority of the Indians. In some respects it would seem to be the other way. In intellectual vigour, at least, the Indians were not wanting. That Europeans should believe, as a matter of course, in the vast superiority of Europeans, not only now, but always, is psychologically interesting. It is so like the opinion of the ancient Greeks about barbarians, and of the modern Chinese about foreigners. But the reasons given are vague, and will scarcely bear examination. I recollect, hearing Professor Buhler at the Oriental Congress in Paris, in 1897, when the argument of climate was adduced, entering the emphatic caution. An Inspector of schools in India for many years, he knew the climate well, and observed that exaggerated estimates of its baneful influence had been most often advanced by those who have never been in India. Those who have lived there knew the great amount of energy and work, both physical and intellectual, that was not only possible, but habitual, to both Europeans and the natives of India. I can fully confirm this. The climate has its positive advantages. All the other foremost civilisations (in Egypt for instance, in Mesopotamia, and in China) grew up, under somewhat similar outward conditions, in warm and fertile river valleys. Climate varies greatly in India. We must not forget that the Sakiya country, at least, in which

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Buddhism arose, stretched up into the lower slopes of the Himalayas. And in the seventh century B.C., the most powerful kingdom was the Northern Kosala, whose capital lay under the hills, and whose power mainly depended on the mountaineers drawn from its vicinity.

It is probable that economic conditions and social institutions were a more important factor in Indian life than geographical positions. Now the social structure of India was based upon the village. We do not as yet know all the details of its organisation; and no doubt different villages, in different districts, varied one from another in the customs of land-tenure and in the rights of individual house-holders as against the community.

It is a common error, vitiating all conclusions as to the early history of India, to suppose that the tribes with whom the Aryans, in their gradual conquest of India, came into contact, were savages. Some were so. There were hill tribes, gypsies, bands of hunters in the woods. But there were also settled communities with a highly developed social organisation, wealthy enough to excite the cupidity of the invaders, and in many cases too much addicted to the activities of peace to be able to offer, whenever it came to a fight, a prolonged resistance. But they were strong enough to retain in some cases, a qualified independence, and in others to impose upon the new nation that issued from the struggle many of their own ideas, many of the details of their own institutions.

And in many cases it never came to a struggle at all. The country was immense. Compared with its wide expanse the tribes and clans were few. Often separated one from the other by broad rivers and impenetrable forests, there must have been ample opportunity for independent growth, and for the interaction of peaceful contact.

These circumstances will explain the divergency in the village arrangements. But in some respects they were all similar. We nowhere hear of isolated houses. The houses were all together, in a group, separated only by narrow lanes. Immediately adjoining was the sacred grove of trees of the primeval forest, left standing when the forest clearing had been made. Beyond this was the wide expanse of cultivated field, usually rice field. And each village had grazing ground for the cattle, and a considerable stretch of jungle, where the villagers had common rights of waste and wood.

The cattle belonged severally to the householders of the village. But no one had separate pasture. After the crop was cut the cattle roamed over the field.

When the crops were growing, they were sent all together, under the charge of a herdsman, hired by the village collectively, to the village grazing grounds beyond the field. The herdsman was an important personage, and is described as:

"Knowing the general appearance of each one of his charge and the marks upon it, skilled to remove flies eggs from their hide and to make sores heal over, accustomed to keep a good fire going with smoke, to keep the gnats away, knowing where the fords are and the drinking places, clever in choosing pasture, leaving milk in the udders, and with a proper respect for the leaders of the herd".

The fields were all cultivated at the same time, the irrigation channels being laid by the community, and the supply of the water regulated by rule, under the supervision of the headman. No individual or corporate proprietor needed to fence his portion of the fields. There was a common fence; and the whole field, with its rows of boundaries, which were also the water channels, bore the appearance of the patched robe of a member of the Buddhist Order.

As a general rule the great field was divided into plots corresponding in number to that of the heads of houses in the villages, and each family took the produce of its share. But there was no such proprietary right, as against the community, as we are accustomed to in England. We hear of no instance of a shareholder selling or mortgaging his share of the village field to an outsider; and it was impossible for him to do so, at least without the consent of the village council. We have three instances of sales of land in the books. But in one case it was forest land cleared by the proprietor or his ancestors. A very old text apparently implies that a piece of ground was given as a sacrificial fee. But it is at once added that the earth itself said—and Mother Earth was a most dread divinity—"No mortal must give me away!"

Neither had any individual the right of bequest, even to the extent of deciding the shares of his own family. All such matters were settled by custom, by the general sense of the community as to what was right and proper. And the general sense did not recognise the right of primogeniture. Very often a family, on the death of a householder, would go on as before under the superintendence of the eldest son. If the property were divided, the land was equally divided among the sons. And though the eldest son received an extra share (differing in different places and times) in the personal property, that also was otherwise divided equally. We find in the earliest law book, that of Gautama, a statement that the

youngest son also, as in the analogous English law of gavelkind, received an extra share; but in the later law books this disappears. The women, too, had their personal property, chiefly jewellery and clothes; and the daughters inherited from the mother. They had no need of a separate share of the land, as they had the advantage of the produce falling to the share of their husbands and brothers.

No individual could acquire, either by purchase or inheritance, any exclusive right in any portion of the common grass-land or wood-land. Great importance was attached to these rights of pasture and forestry. The priests claimed to be able, as one result of performing a particular sacrifice (with six hundred victims), to ensure that a wide tract of such land should be provided. And it is often made a special point, in describing the grant of a village to a priest, that it contained such a common.

What happened in such a case was that the king granted, not the land (he had no property in the land), but the tithe due by custom, to the government as yearly tax. The peasantry were not ousted from any of their rights. Their position was indeed improved. For, paying only the same tax as before, they thus acquired the protection of a strong influence, which would not fail, on occasion, to be exerted on their behalf.

Not that they were usually without some such protection. It was through the village headman that all government business was carried on, and he had both opportunity and power to represent their case to the

higher officials. From the fact that the appointment of this officer is not claimed for the king until the later law books it is almost certain that, in earlier times, the appointment was either hereditary, or conferred by the village council itself.

This village headman had, no doubt, to prepare the road, and provide food, on the occasion of a royal person or high official visiting his village. But we find no mention of corvee, forced labour (*rajakariya*) at this period. And even in the law books which refer to a later date, this is mentioned as a service due from artisans and mechanics, and not from villagers.

On the other hand, villagers are described as uniting, of their own accord, to build Mote-halls and rest-houses and reservoirs, to mend the roads between their own and adjacent villages and even to lay out parks. And it is interesting to find that women are proud to bear a part in such works of public utility.

The economic conditions in such villages were simple. None of the householders could have been what would now be called rich. On the other hand there was a sufficiency for their simple needs, there was security, there was independence. There were no landlords and no paupers. There was little if any crime. What crime there was in the country was nearly all outside the villages. When the central power was strong enough as it usually was, to put down dacoity, the people, to quote the quaint words of an old Suttanta, "pleased one with another and happy, dancing their children in their hands, dwelt with open doors."

The only serious inroad upon that happiness seems to have been famine resulting from drought. It is true that Megasthenes, long ambassador at the court of Magadha, says that, owing to irrigation, famines were quite unknown. But we have too many references to times of scarcity, and that, too, in the very districts adjacent to Patna where Megasthenes lived, to accept his statement as accurate for the time we are discussing. As those references refer, however, to a date two centuries earlier, it is possible (but not, I think, very probable) that things in this respect had improved in the interval between the times referred to in our records, and that of Megasthenes.

It was under some such economic conditions as these, that the great bulk—say at least 70-80 per cent.—of the people lived. In the books, ancient and modern, the remaining few are so much more constantly mentioned (precisely because they differ from the mass, and the mass is taken for granted as understood) that the impression given to the reader is apt to be entirely misleading. These others—priests and kings, outcasts and



Genii riding on addoned goats, panel on lowest beam of East Gate. Great Stupa, Sanchi, 1st Century B. C.

jugglers, soldiers, citizens, and, medicant thinkers—played their part, and an important part. But the peoples of India, then, much more even than now, were, first and foremost, village folk. In the whole vast territory from Kandahar nearly to Calcutta, and from the Himalayas southwards to the Run of Kach, we find mentioned barely a score of towns of any considerable size.

It has been seen, however, that the mass of people, the villagers, occupied a social grade quite different from, and far above, our village folk. They considered it a degradation, to which only dire misfortune would drive them, to work for hire. They were proud of their standing, their family, and their village. And they were governed by headmen of their own class and village, very probably selected by themselves, in accordance with their own customs and ideals.

SOCIAL GRADES

Perhaps the most important of these in their own eyes were the customs as to the holding and distribution of land and property. But those social grades regarding religion on the one hand, and *connubium* and *commensality* on the other, had probably a greater effect on the real well-being and national progress.

We have learnt in recent years that among primitive peoples all over the world there exist restrictions as to the *connubium* (the right of intermarriage), and *commensality* (the right of eating together). Customs of endogamy and exogamy, that is, of choosing a husband or a wife outside a limited circle of relationship, and inside a wider circle, were universal. A man, for instance, may not marry in his own family, he may marry within his own clan, he may not marry outside the clan. Among different tribes the limits drawn were subject to different customs, and were not the same in detail. But the limits were always there. There were customs of eating together at sacred tribal feasts from which foreigners were excluded; customs of not eating together with persons outside certain limits of relationship, except under special circumstances; here again the details differ. But the existence of such restrictions as to *commensality* were once universal.

In India even in the Seventh Century B.C. such customs were prevalent in widely different forms among the different tribes—Aryan, Dravidian, Kolarian, and others—which made up the mixed population. We have unfortunately only Aryan records. And they, of course, take all the customs for granted, being addressed to people who knew all about them. We have therefore to depend on hints; and the hints given have not, as yet, been all collected and sifted. But a considerable number, and those of great importance,



Centaur (Kimpurusa) and female rider, roundel on railing of berm, Great Stupa, Sanchi, middle of 2nd Century B.C.

have been already observed; so that we are able to draw out some principal points in a sketch that requires future filling in.

The basis of the social distinctions was relationship; or, as the Aryans, proud of their lighter colour, put it, colour. Their books constantly repeat a phrase as being common among the people—and it was certainly common at least among the Aryans, sections of the people—which divided all the world, as they knew it, into four social grades, called Colours (*Vanna*). At the head were the Aryan tribes in their invasion of the continent. They were most particular as to the purity of their descent through seven generations both on the father's and the mother's side; and are described as "fair in colour, fine in presence, stately to behold". Then came the Brahmins, claiming descent from the sacrificing priests, and though the majority of them followed their other pursuits, they were, equally with the nobles, distinguished by high birth and clear complexion. Below these were the peasantry, the people, the Vaisyas or Vessas. And last of all came the Sudras, which included the bulk of the people of non-Aryan descent, who worked for hire, were engaged in handicraft or service, and were darker in colour.

In a general way this classification corresponded to the actual facts of life; but there were insensible gradations within the limits of each of the four

colours, and the limits themselves were both variable and undefined.

And this enumeration of the populace was not complete. Below all four, that is below the Sudras, we have mention of other "low tribes" and "low trades"—*hina-jatiyo* and *hina-sippani*. Among the first we are told of workers in rushes, bird-catchers, and cart-makers—aboriginal tribesmen who were hereditary craftsmen in these three ways. Among the latter—mat-makers, barbers, potters, weavers and leather-workers—it is implied that there was no hard and fast line, determined by birth. People could, and did, change their vocations by adopting one or other of these "low trades". Thus in Jat. 5,290, we find that a love-lorn Kshatriya works successively (without any dishonour or penalty) as a potter, basket-maker, reed-worker, garland-maker, and cook. Also in Jat. 6,372, a setthi works as a tailor and as a potter, and still retains the respect of his high-born relations.

Finally we have in both Jain and Buddhist books of aboriginal tribes, Chandalas and Pukkusas, who were more despised even than these low tribes and trades.

Besides the above, who were all freemen, there were also slaves; individuals who had been captured in predatory raids and reduced to slavery, or had been deprived of their freedom as a judicial punishment, or submitted to slavery of their own accord. Children born to such slaves were also slaves; and the emancipation of slaves is often referred to. But we hear nothing of such later developments of slavery as rendered the Greek mines, the Roman *lati-fundia*, or the plantations of Christian slave-owners—scenes of misery and oppression. For the most part the slaves were household servants, and not badly treated, and their numbers seem to have been insignificant.

Such were the divisions of the people. The three upper classes had originally been one; for the nobles and priests were merely those members of the third class, the Vessas, who had raised themselves into a higher social rank. And though more difficult probably than it had been, it was still possible for analogous changes to take place. Poor men could become nobles, and both could become Brahmins. We have numerous instances in the books, some of them unconsciously preserved even in the later priestly books which are otherwise under the spell of the caste theory. And though each case is then referred to as if it were exceptional, the fact no less remains that the line between the "Colours" was not yet strictly drawn. The members of the higher colours were not even all of them white. Some, of the Kshatriyas no doubt were

descended from the chiefs and nobles of the Dravidian and Kolarian tribes who had preserved, by conquest or by treaty, their independence or their social rank. And others of the same tribes were, from time to time, acquiring political importance, and with it an entry into a higher social grade.

There are also numerous instances, even in the priestly manuals of custom, of unions between men and women of all degrees of social importance. These are not only between men of rank and girls of a lower social grade, but also between men of a lower, and women of a higher position; and we ought not to be in the least surprised to find such cases mentioned in the books. Even without them we should know, from the existing facts, what must have happened. It is generally admitted that there are now no pure Aryans left in India. Had the actual custom been as strict as the Brahmin theory this would not be so. Just as in England we find Iberians, Kelts, Angles, Saxons, Danes, and Normans now fused, in spite of theoretical restrictions on intermarriage, into one nation, so in Northern India the ancient distinction, Aryan, Kolarian and Dravidian, cannot at the time of the rise of Buddhism, any longer be recognised. Long before the priestly theory of caste had been brought into any sort of working order, a fusion sufficient at least to obliterate completely the old landmarks, was an accomplished fact; and the modern divisions, though race has also its share in them, use different names and are based on different ideas.

We may remark incidentally that there can have been no such physical repulsion as obtained between the advanced and savage races of to-day—a repulsion arising partly from great difference in customs and in intellectual culture, but still more largely dependent on difference of colour. On the other hand, though the fact of frequent intermarriage is undoubted; though the great chasm between the proudest Kshatriya on the one hand and the lowest Chandala on the other was bridged over by a number of almost imperceptible stages, and the boundaries between these stages were constantly being overstepped, still there were also real obstacles to unequal unions. Though the lines of demarcation were not yet drawn hard and fast, we still have to visualize, not a state of society where there were no lines of demarcation at all, but a constant struggle between attracting and repelling forces.

It will sound most amazing to those familiar with Brahmin pretensions (either in modern times in India, or in priestly books such as Manu and the Epics) to hear Brahmins spoken of as "low-born". Yet that

precisely is an epithet applied to them in comparison with the kings.

The fact is that the claim of the priests to social superiority had not until then been accepted by the people anywhere in North India. Even Pre-Buddhistic holy books imply this state of affairs. They claim for the North-western, as distinct from the Easterly provinces a most strict adherence to ancient custom. The ideal land is to them, that of the Kurus and Panchalas, not that of the Kasis and Kosalas. But nowhere do they put forward in their earlier books these arrogant claims, as against the Kshatriyas, which are a distinctive feature of the later literature. The kings are their patrons to whom they look up, from whom they hope to receive approval and rewards. And it was not till the time we are now discussing that they put forward claims, which we find still vigorously disputed by all Kshatriyas—and by no means only by those of noble birth (a small minority of the whole), who happen also to be Buddhists.

We find for instance, that the Jain books take it throughout as a matter of course, that the priests as regards social standing, are below the nobles. This was the natural relation between the two, as we find throughout the world. Certain priests, in India as elsewhere, had very high social rank—Pokkharasadi and Sonadanda for instance. But as a class and as a whole, the priests looked up to the nobles, and were considered to be socially beneath them.

Restrictions as to marriage and as to eating together, such as then existed in North India, existed also everywhere throughout the world, among peoples of a similar stage of culture. They are, it is true, the key to the origin of the later Indian caste system. But that system involves much more than these restrictions. And it is no more accurate to speak of caste at the Buddha's time in India, than it would be to speak of it as an established institution, at the same time, in Italy or Greece. There is no word even for caste. The words often wrongly rendered by that modern expression (itself derived from a Portuguese word) have something to do with the question, but do not mean caste. The colours (*Vanna*) were not caste. Not one of them had any of the distinctive marks of a caste, as the term is now used, and as it always has been used since it was first introduced by Europeans, and there was neither *connubium* nor *commensality* between the members of each. *Jati* is "birth", and pride of birth may have had to do with the subsequent building up of caste prejudices; but it exists in Europe to-day, and is an idea very different from that of caste. *Kula* is "family" or "clan" according to the context. And

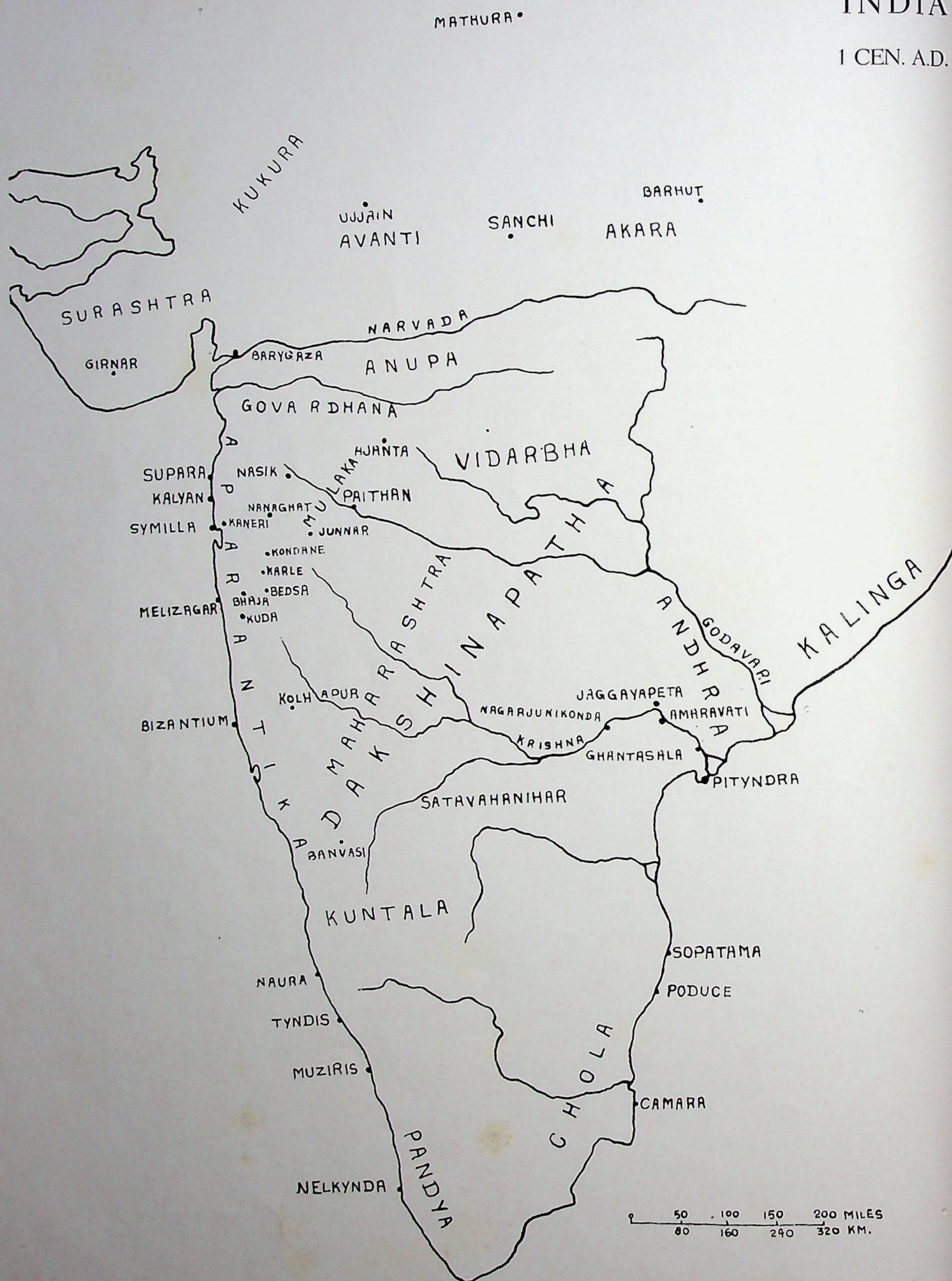
though the mediaeval caste system had much to do with families and clans, it is only misleading to confuse terms which are so essentially different, or to read back a mediaeval idea into these ancient documents. The caste system in any proper or exact use of the term, did not exist till long afterwards.



Figure of a door-keeper, (*Dvarapala*) seen generally at the bottom of each of the four Toranas of Stupa No. 1

INDIA

1 CEN. A.D.



Evolution of Buddhist Architecture and Sculpture in the time of Satavahanas:

by
Dr. Krishna Gairola

Preliminary: Historical Note on the Satavahana Dynasty

The history of the Satavahana dynasty is still largely a matter of controversy and requires revision, especially with regard to its chronological details. The main object of the present study, however, is to provide an account of some cultural aspects of this period, aspects which are based mainly on archaeological evidences. The Satavahana or Satakarni kings have been identified by S. Levi (*Journal Asiatique*, 1936, pp. 61, 62) with the Saraganes of Greek texts. They are known from numerous inscriptions and coins found in the Deccan and the Andhra country and are the same as the Andhrabhrtya mentioned in the Puranas.

The exact date of the Satavahana ascension to power is highly controversial. Eminent historians such as Smith (*Early History of India*, pp. 17, 18) and Rapson (*Catalogue of Indian Coins: Andhras and Western Kshatrapas*, p. xvii) place it in the Third and Second Centuries B.C. respectively, and postulate that the Satavahanas originally lived in the Andhra country. But later researches make it clear that the first Satavahana king cannot be dated earlier than the First Century B.C. and that the dynasty was first established in Western Maharashtra and not in Andhradesa. According to R. C. Bhandarkar, the founder of the dynasty, Simuka, came to power in 73 B.C. (*Early History of the Deccan*, p. 59). On the other hand, Sri Satakarni, the third king of the dynasty, has been identified by Jouveau-Dubreuil with the king of the same name mentioned on the southern gateway of the great Stupa of Sanchi and is placed between 70 and 60 B.C. (*Ancient History of the Deccan*, p. 15). It seems certain, however, that the rise of the Satavahanas took place sometime during the first quarter of the First Century B.C.

The Puranas differ as far as the total number of the Andhra kings, and the duration of their reign, are concerned. The total number varies from 17 to 30

kings, their rule covering a range of 273 to 460 years (Pargiter: *Dynasties of the Kali Age*). The number of kings known from inscriptions and coins does not exceed 17. Many of these names do not correspond with those found in the Puranas. It is likely that some of them were regional princes ruling simultaneously over different parts of the empire. The accounts of the Greek geographer, Ptolemy, and the Kolhapur coin hoard, make us believe that a line of kings, using matronymics like the Satavahanas, ruled independently in the region of Kolhapur. We learn from Ptolemy that one of the kings of this line called Vilivayakura was a contemporary of Pulumavi, the Satavahana king ruling at Paithan. As J. Filliozat has remarked, the disintegration of the Satavahana empire began about 150 A.D. (*L'Inde Classique*, p. 239). This is the date when Saka Kshatrapa Rudradaman defeated King Vashisthiputra Sri Pulumavi, who is probably the same as Siro Ptolomios (Sri Pulumavi) mentioned by Ptolemy. From this time on, the Satavahana power was limited mainly to the Andhradesa and its adjacent areas.

There are literary and epigraphic evidences to prove that the Andhra-Satavahana kings were Brahmans. Without a single exception, all the Satavahana inscriptions and coins are in Prakrit and not in Telugu, as one may think because of the term "Andhra" associated with them. The Satavahanas seem to originate from the region around Paithan (Pratishthan) on the upper Godavari river in the Aurangabad district of Hyderabad State. Paithan was the first capital of the Satavahana empire. Kings of this line had frequent wars with the contemporary Saka (Scythian) rulers of Western India. Luckily many of the Saka inscriptions are dated according to the 'Saka era' (starting in 78 A.D.) which helps us also in tracing the chronology of the Satavahana dynasty. Two outstanding events of the

Saka-Satavahana history are the complete destruction of the Kshaharata family of Nahapana by Gautami-putra Sri Satakarni (c. 124 A.D.), and Mahakshatrapa Rudraman's victory over Vashisthiputra Sri Pulumavi (150 A.D.). One of the main causes of conflict between them was evidently the ambition to control the Western Indian ports (mentioned in the "Periplus of the Erythrean Sea") which had a flourishing trade with the Roman Empire. As Codrington has pointed out, many of these ports were connected by ancient roads with the cities in the interior (Indian Antiquary, 1930, vol. 59, p. 10). The Saka pressure from the west forced the Satavahanas to retire to the south and south-east. It eventually brought Amaravati, their second capital, into prominence. Vashisthiputra Sri Pulumavi is the first Satavahana king whose inscriptions are found in the Andhra country. The last king of the dynasty was Yajna Sri Satakarni who temporarily regained the lost power of his family. The final disintegration of the Satavahana empire started during the first quarter of the Third Century A.D.

During the three centuries of Satavahana rule, many beautiful Buddhist monuments were erected. The most important are Sanchi (gateways), earlier Western Indian cave temples and Amaravati, which at one time or the other lay within the Satavahana empire. This period is equally important for social, religious and maritime activities. The famous Buddhist philosopher Nagarjuna who, according to Rhys Davids (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 11th edition, vol. XIX. p. 151), is the founder of the Madhyamika school of Mahayana Buddhism, was most probably a contemporary of one of the later Satavahana kings.

The Satavahana kings appear to have been followers of Brahmanical Hinduism, but, the art developed in their times was Buddhist. Monuments of the Satavahana period are distributed over the Deccan

and consist of the Western India cave temples and the Stupas of Sanchi and Amaravati¹. Apart from their historical interest, these indicate a regular evolution of art during the three centuries of Satavahana rule (c. 73 B.C.—c. 220 A.D.).

Among the rock-cut Chaitya-halls (Buddhist assembly halls) of Western India, the finest examples are those at Bhaja, Kondane, Pitalkhora, Ajanta, Bedsa, Junnar, Nasik, Karle and Kanheri². A study of their style and decoration helps us in establishing their approximate chronological order. All these cave temples have been cut out of the solid rock. The rock, which is the Deccan trap, shapes the landscape of the country, and the temples are reproductions of the ancient assembly halls preserving the details of their wooden constructions. In elevation they resemble the barrel-roofed buildings³ of Bharhut and Sanchi bas-reliefs. They are apsidal in plan, with side-aisles and are lit by the great Chaitya-window at one end. Both the big Chaitya-window and the roof of the hall are reinforced by rafters which are characteristic of wooden architecture. Attached to the Chaityagrihas were the Viharas or monasteries, where the monks spent the rainy season.

With the exception of Bhaja, the earliest caves are almost devoid of figure sculpture. The total absence of the Buddha figures in the early Western Indian cave temples suggest that they were executed by Hinayana Buddhists whose doctrines did not allow the anthropomorphic representation of the Buddha. The Stupa, symbol of Buddha's death, was the only object of worship in the early Buddhist Chaityas. On the other hand, towards the end of the Second Century A.D., the Buddhists of the Mahayana school of Amaravati, represented the Buddha in human form. But the first Buddha figures were already created by the Northern Indian school of Gandhara and Mathura.



Griffin, half-roundel, on the upper portion of a Railing Pillar, Stupa of the Saints, Sanchi. Second half of 2nd Century B.C.



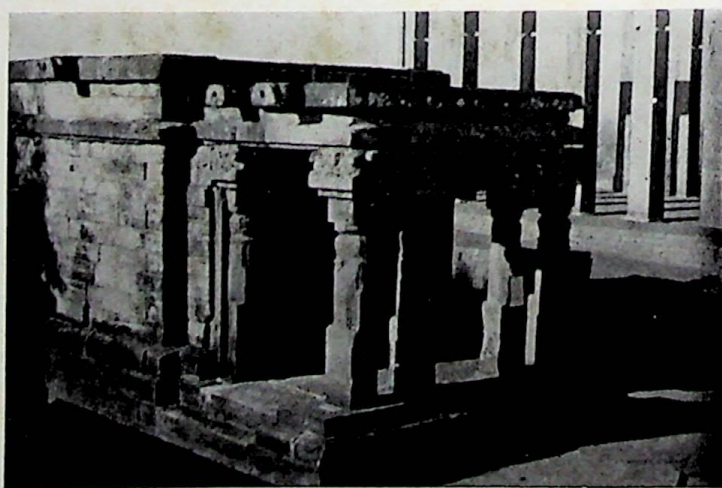
Sanchi: The Great Stupa, East Gate, early 1st Century B.C.



Ambulatory of the Great Stupa, Sandstone, Sanchi, Bhopal. Middle of 2nd Century B.C.



Sanchi: Temple 18



Sanchi: Temple 17

ARCHITECTURE

SANCHI

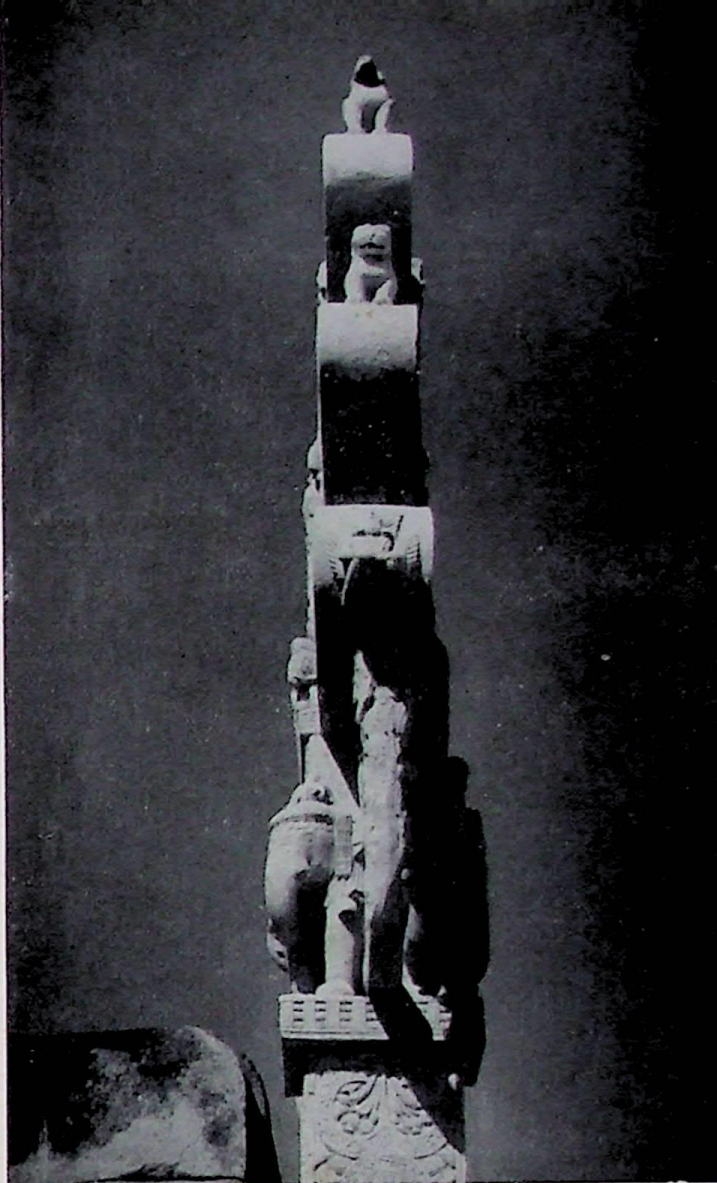
The origin of the Stupas, such as are to be found in Sanchi, seems to have been a special burial mound. After his death, the ashes of the Buddha were enshrined under artificial earthen or brick hillocks. The Buddhist texts speak of eight great stupas of this kind having been built, but no such monuments of the pre-Ashokan period have been discovered.

The veneration paid to the relic mounds owes itself probably to the personal bias of the Emperor Ashoka to use Buddhist shrines as propaganda for the unity of his far flung empire. It is said that the devout Emperor distributed the surviving Bodhi relics of the Buddha into stupas, put up in all the principal towns of his realm. The worship of the mortal remains of the Buddha, who had attained Nirvana, led to the stupa being considered a symbol of the Buddha.

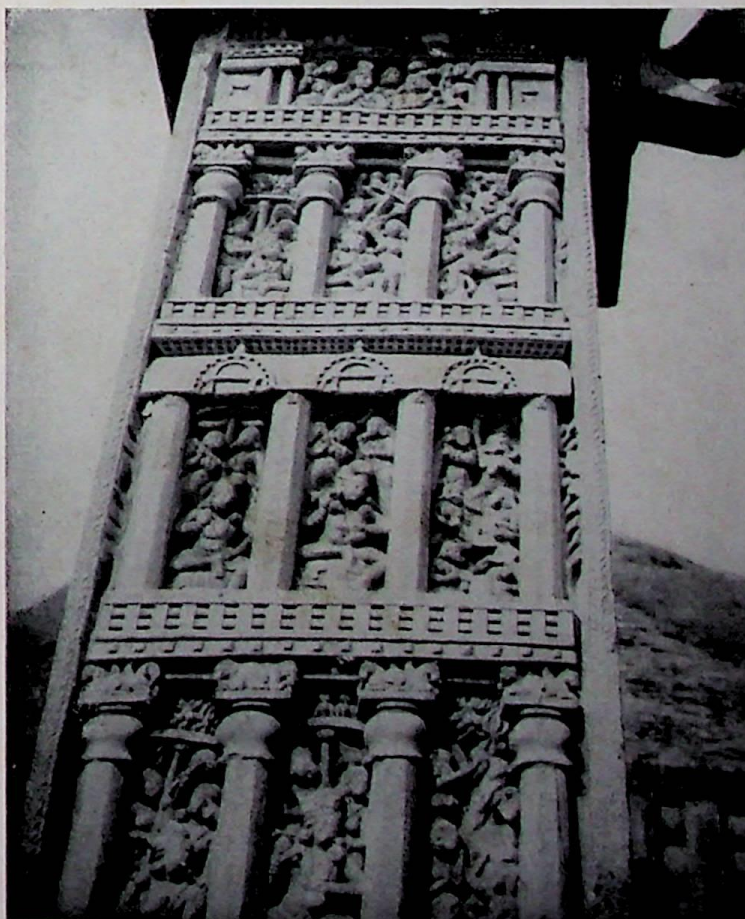
One of the earliest stupas at Sanchi was built under the Satavahanas on the foundation of a great stupa already erected there under Ashoka.

The architecture of the stupa is fairly simple. It consists of a circular base, which supports a hemispherical cupola. Around this dome-like structure was constructed, in Sanchi, a sandstone railing, with gateways which allow entrance to the circular enclosure, separating the mound from the railing. The gateways of Sanchi are carved out in the most intricate manner in medallions and rectangular panels, with decorative motifs, such as the wheel, the tree, or birds and animals, supposed to narrate the story of the Buddha's life in his former incarnation.

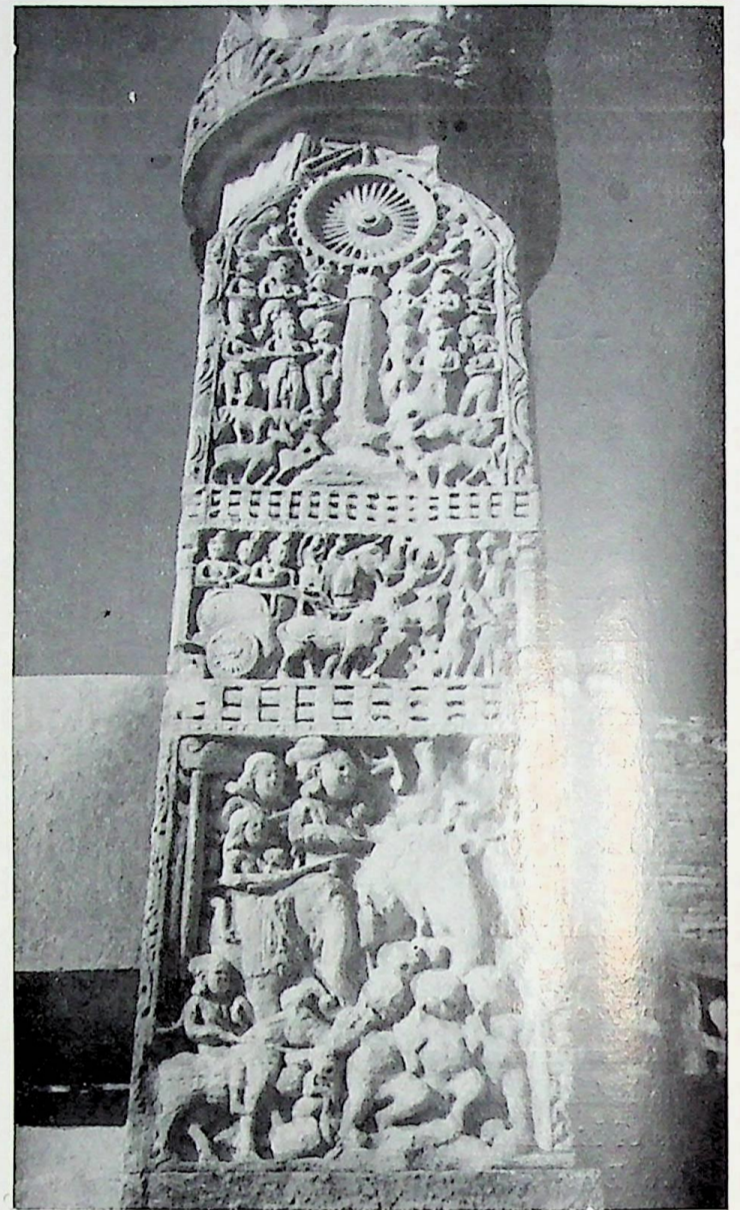
The style of these motifs suggests affinities with the prototypes in wood and ivory, which were obviously being carved for hundreds of years before the earliest phases of relief sculpture became possible. Thus the structure represents, with these rich carvings, one of the finest early monuments of Indian architecture in which a perfect balance is achieved of all the elements which had gone to the art of building in wood during the previous thousand or more years.



Sanchi: Side view of the Gateway

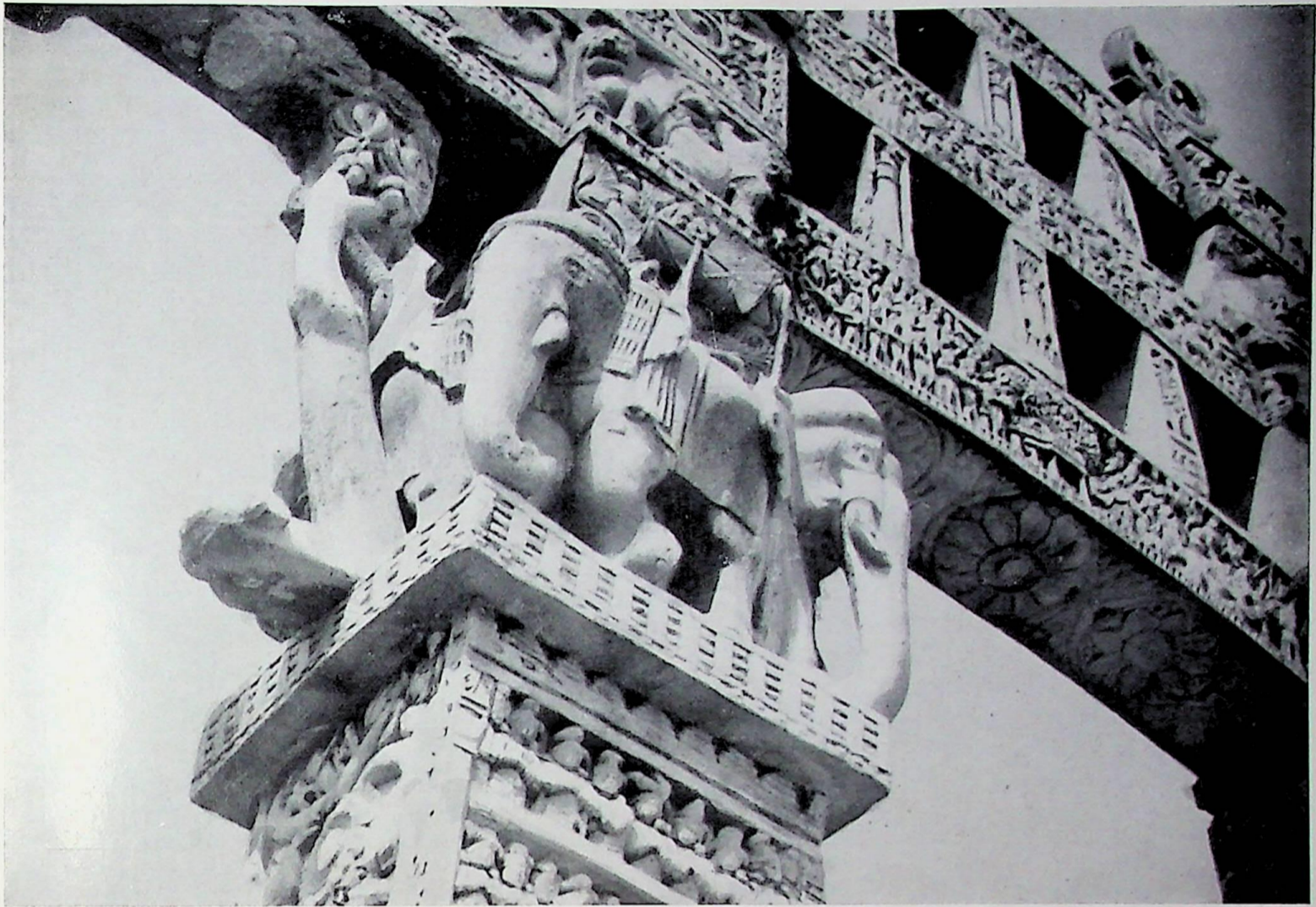


Sanchi: Detail of Railing Pillar

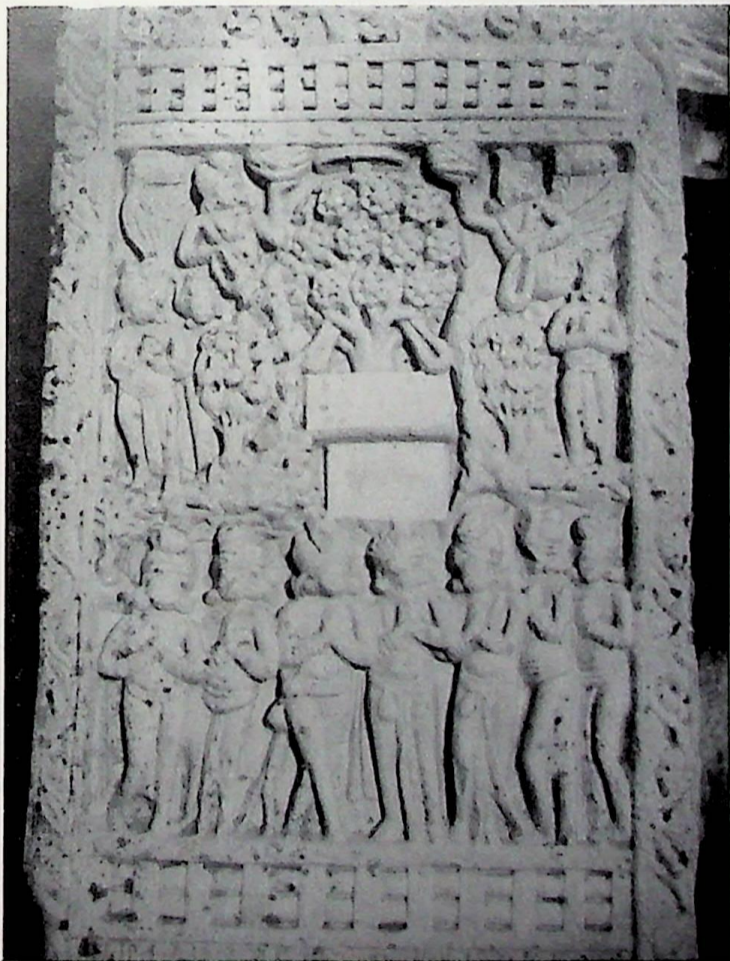


Sanchi: Detail of Railing Pillar

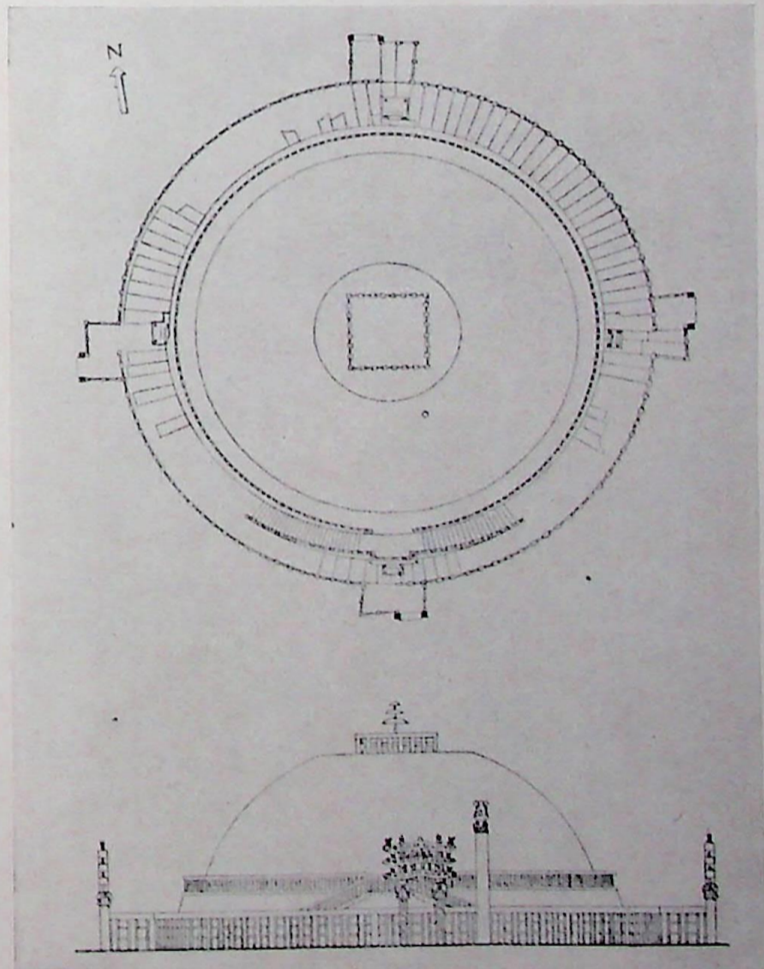
Figure of a door-keeper (Dvarapala) seen generally at the bottom of each of the four Toranas of Stupa No. 1



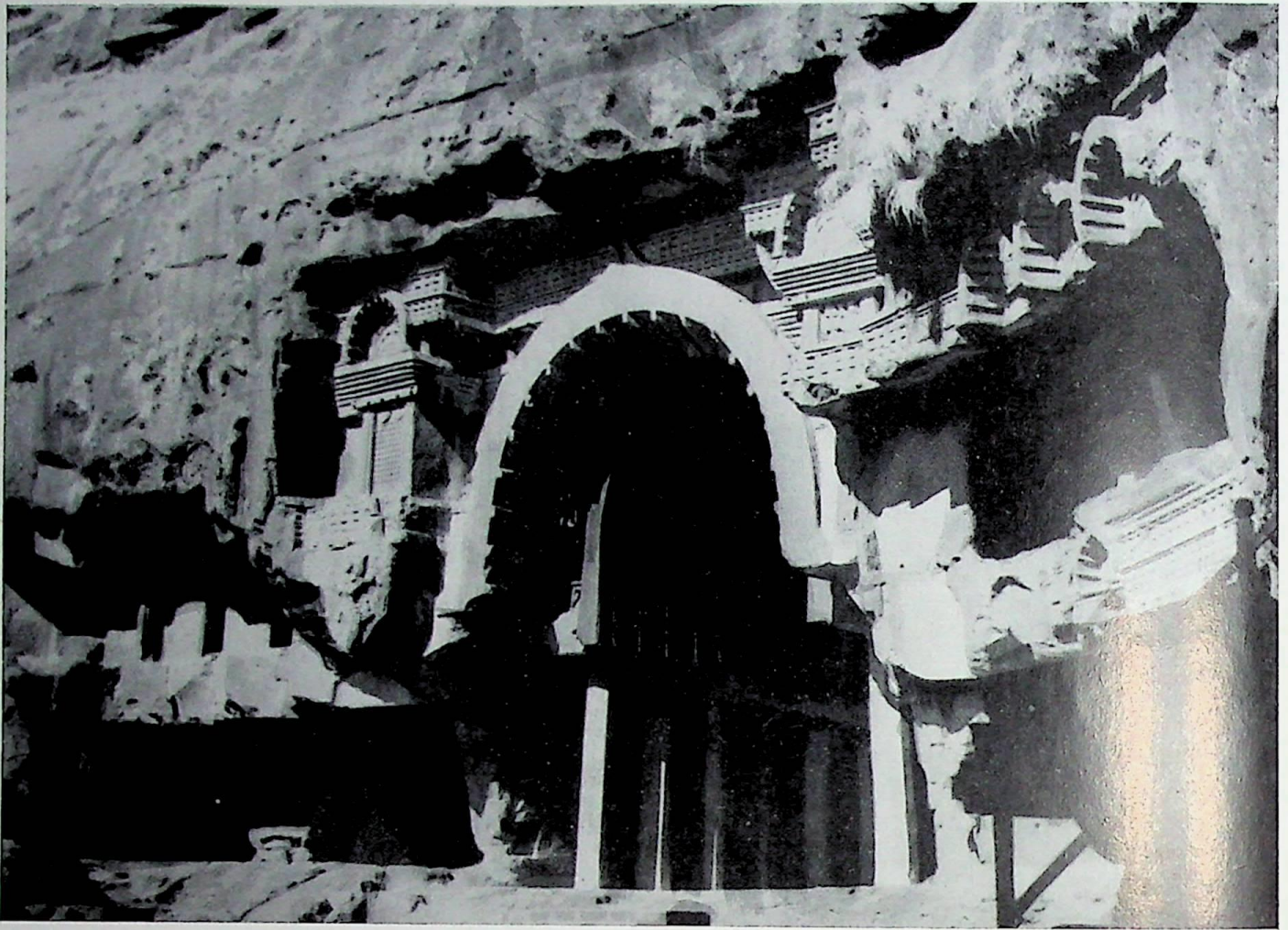
Sanchi: Detail of the Gateway



Sanchi: Relief Carving

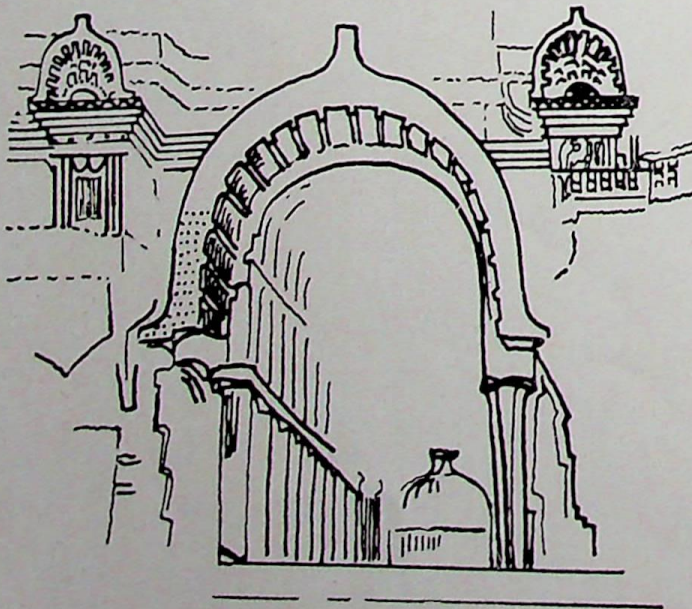


Sanchi: Great Stupa. Plan and Elevation



Bhaja: Showing Rock-cut Monastery in Rock formation

Design of Gateway

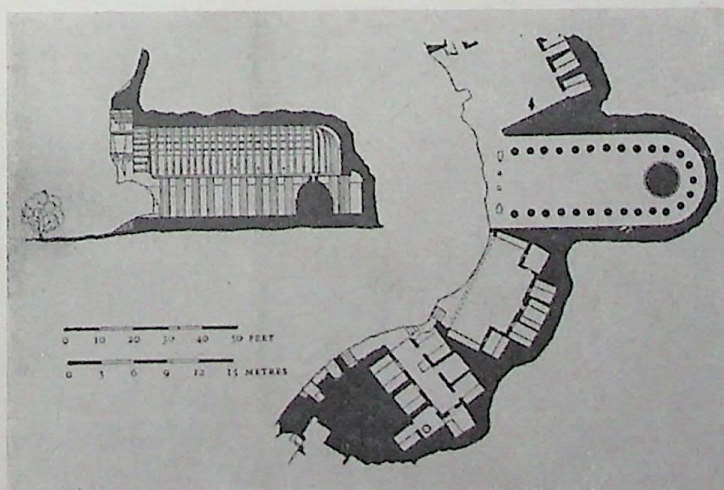


ROCK-CUT ARCHITECTURE

The rock-cut monasteries existed before the Western Indian cave temples were created. The Lomas Rishi cave of the Barabar hills (Bihar), dedicated to the use of the Ajivika sects (Third Century B.C.), is the earliest example of this type. But a regular development of the technique of rock-cut architecture begins in Western India about Second—First Century B.C. and continues all the Eighth Century A.D. when it reached its highest point in the Kailash temple at Ellora.

BHAJA, KONDANE, PITALKHORA

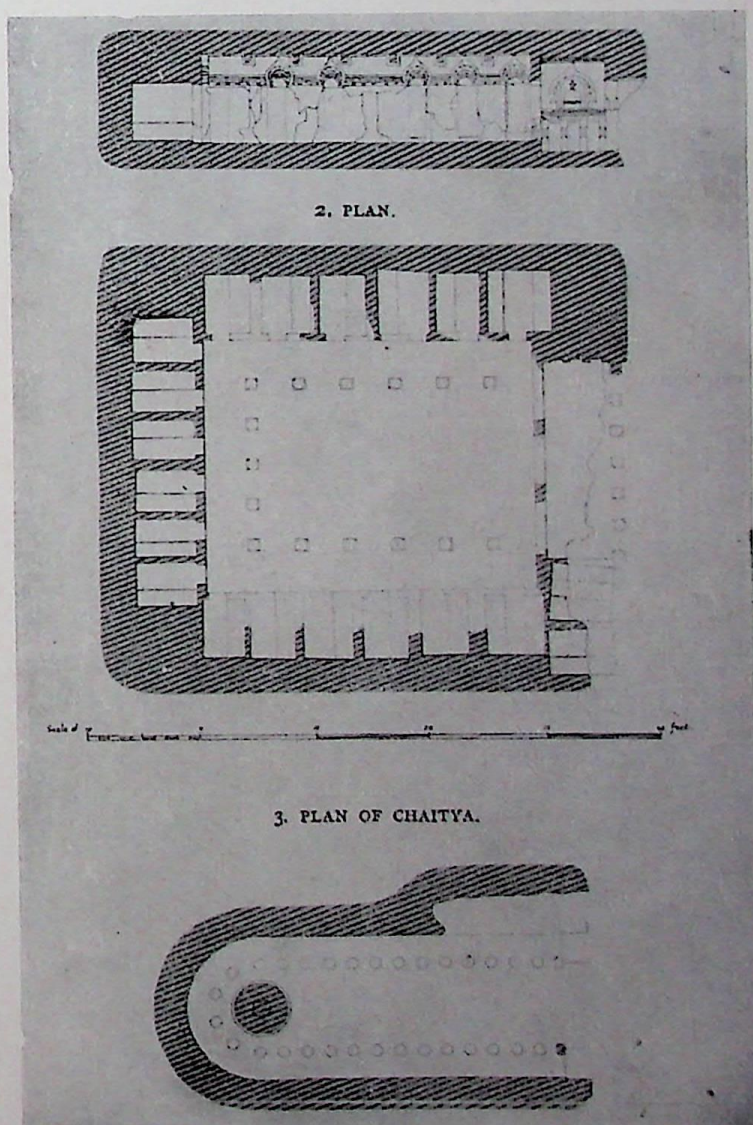
The Vihara at Bhaja⁴ near Poona is one of the oldest among the rock-cut temples of the Western Ghats. Its facade consists of a plain central Chaitya-window of horse-shoe shape, mounting in the centre higher than the frieze which is decorated with railing motif and separates twin Chaitya niches. The two rows of plain octagonal columns of the interior slant outward, so that the weight of the superstructure is evenly distributed. All these features observed at Bhaja show that the cave was designed after some prevalent wooden model. The Chaitya caves at Bhaja and Kondane have similar fronts constructed in wood. They are so like one another that they may be ascribed to the same period. The only difference of time between the two is indicated by the facade at Bhaja which apparently had wooden ornaments attached to the horse-shoe fronton (Chaitya-window), which, is missing at Kondane⁵. Moreover, the Chaitya-window at Kondane is more circular and refined in its construction and thus shows an advance over the Chaitya facade at Bhaja. On the other hand the caves at Bedsa and Pitalkhora maintain the uniformity of style as seen at the Chaitya at Bhaja. Like Bhaja, the Chaitya at Bedsa retains the wooden screen let into the rock in front of the great window. This originally formed a marked feature in the wooden structures from which these caves were copied.



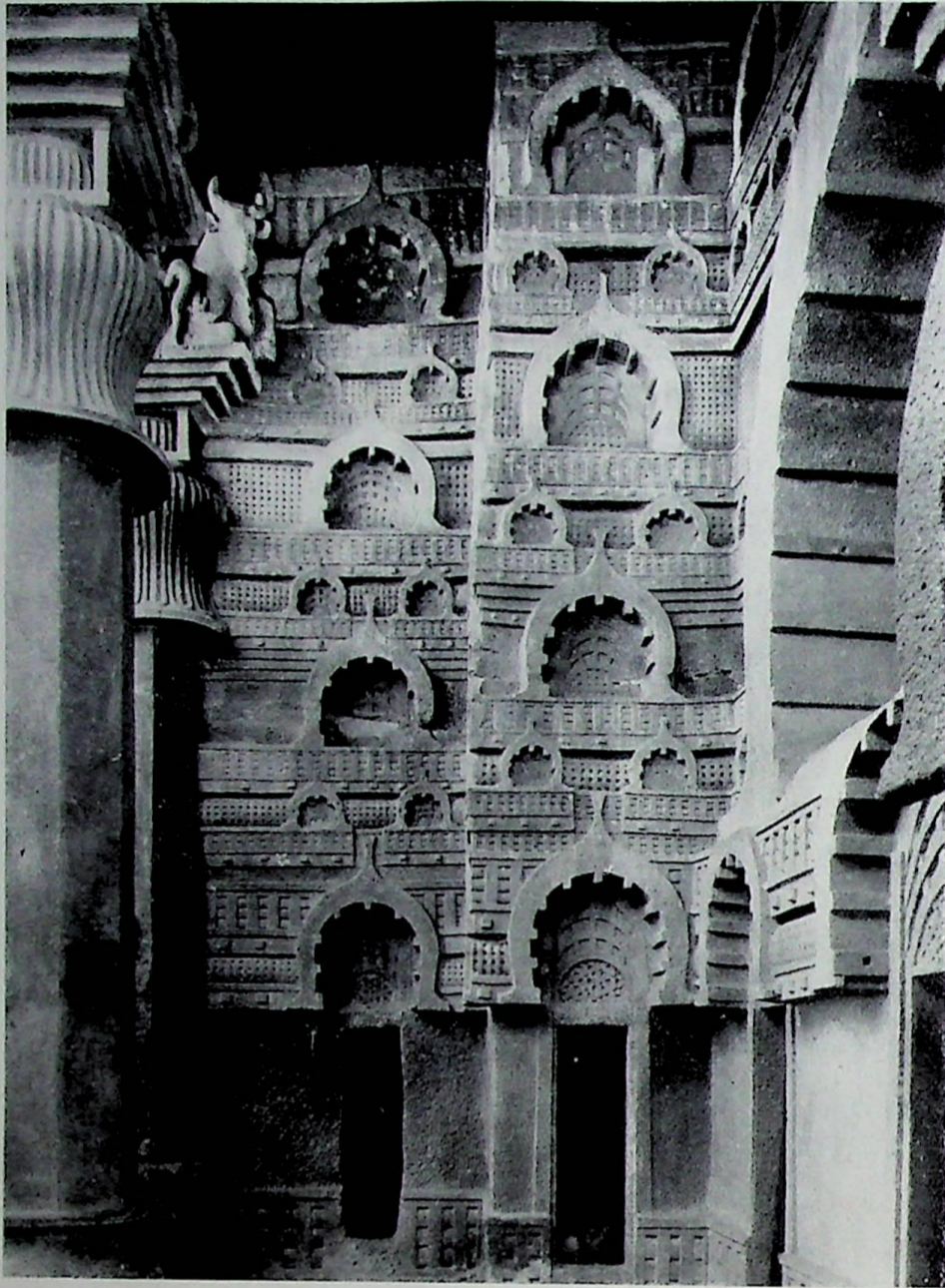
Bhaja Plan: Chaitya and Vihara



*Kondane: Architectural Detail
Courtesy of Archaeological survey, Aurangabad*



Kondane: Section of Vihara



*Bedse: Chaitya Caves,
showing carving on the left
wall of verandah*

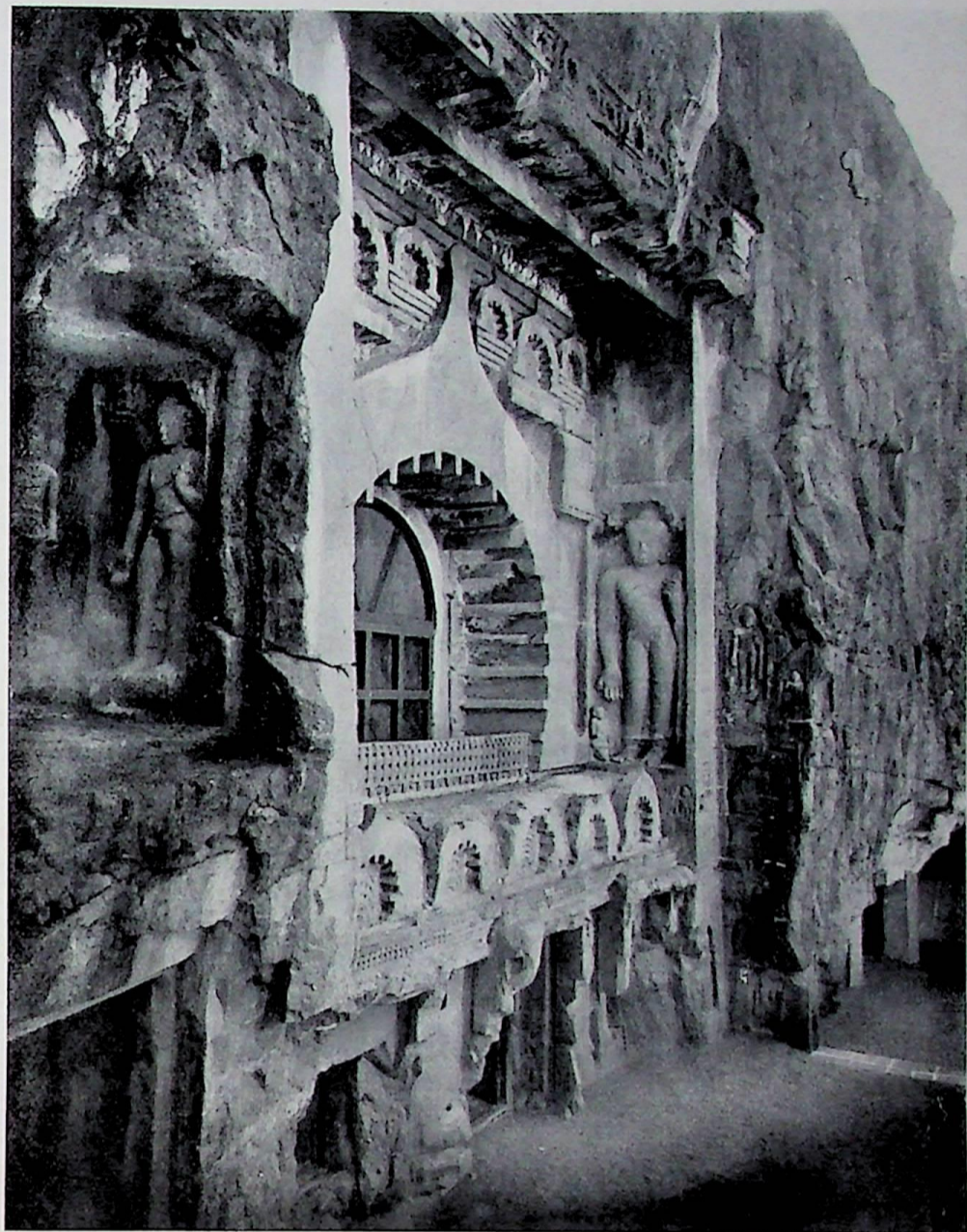
*Bedse: Showing carving
of Inner Sanctuary*

BEDSA, AJANTA, NASIK

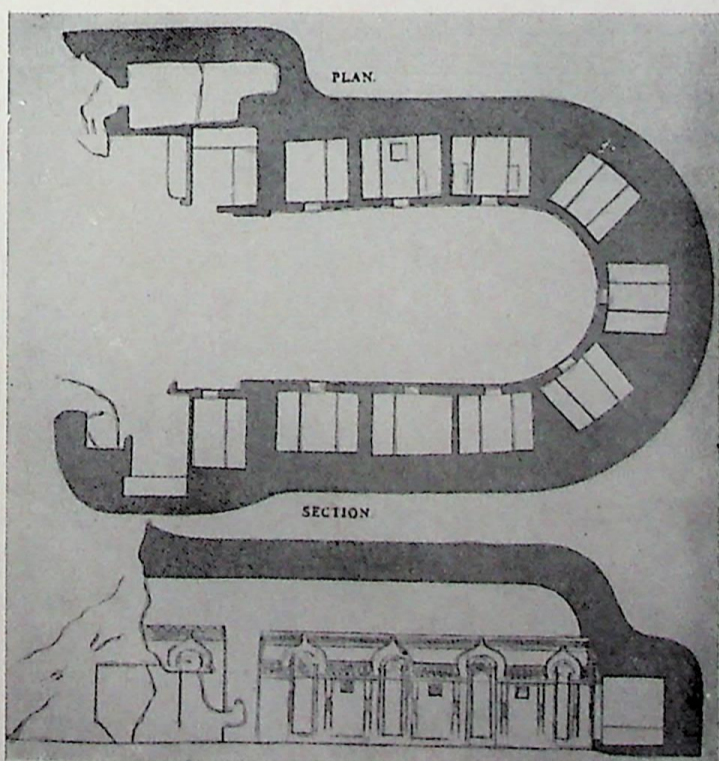
The facade of the Bedse⁶ cave is highly important, for it offers elements that appear to have an influence on the Chaitya at Karle. The pillars inside the Chaitya hall remain simple, octagonal and without any capital or base, but, the massive pilasters on the two ends of the verandah are decorated with rich capitals of Persepolitan type. The bottom of the capital is decorated with a lotiform bell; a compact "amalaka" type cushion separates it from an inverted pyramid supporting criss-crossed animal statuettes and their riders. At Karle the same motif is systematically used for decorating the pillars inside the Chaitya hall. A similar decorative scheme can be noticed on the capitals of the lion-columns in front of the Chaitya. The columns of the Vihara-caves 1 and 3 at Junnar have capitals showing the same type of decoration.



*Ajanta: Cave IX, showing
Architectural Detail of Gateway*

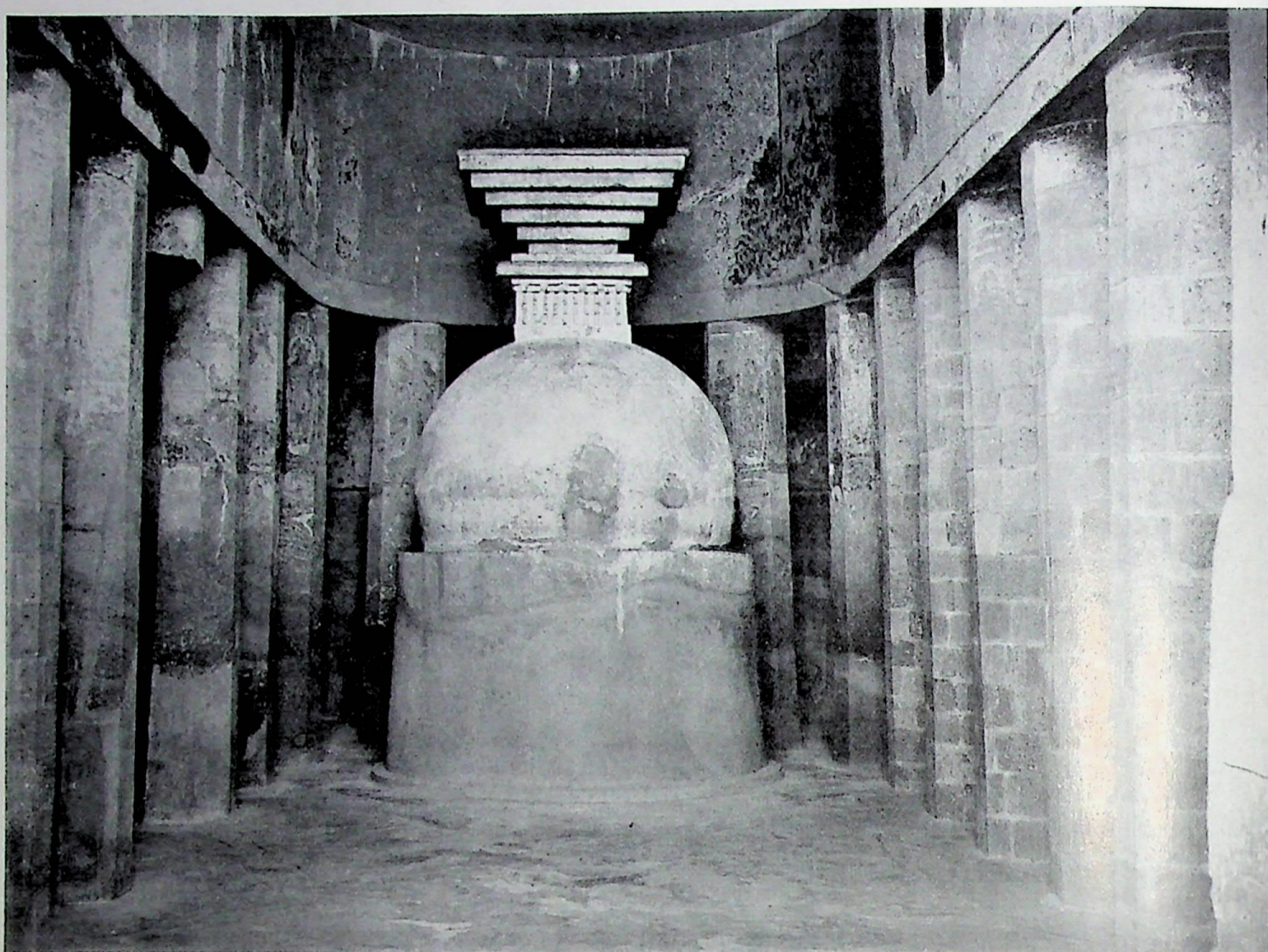


Bedsa: Plan

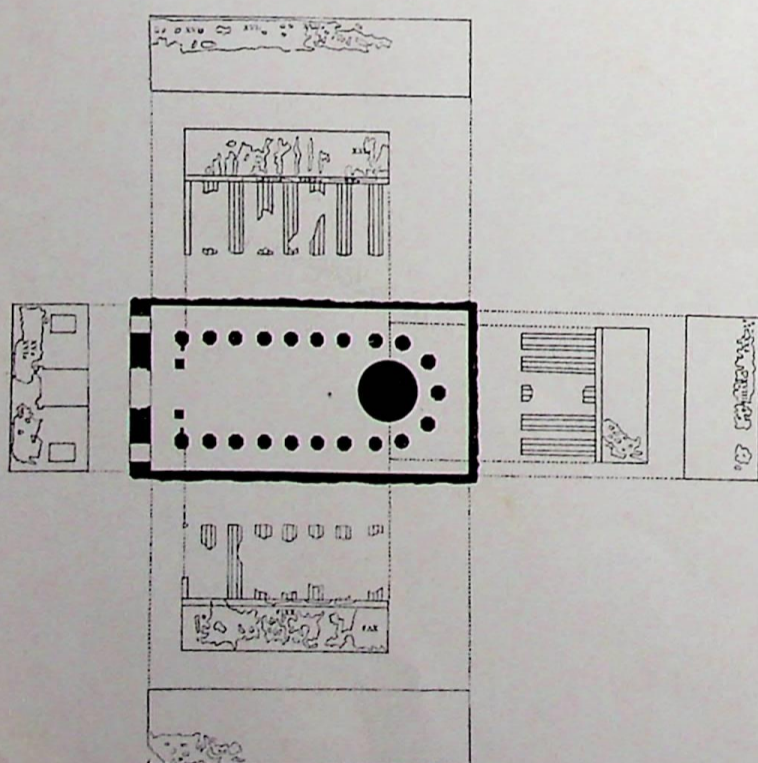


But here the crossed animals at the top and the cushion motif of "amalaka" are missing.

Some of the later Western Indian caves show a definite tendency towards reducing the wooden attachments to the rock-cut structure. It is particularly noticeable at Ajanta cave No. 10 where rafters of the roof in the side-aisles, instead of being of wood, are now carved out of the rock⁷. This cave and the Pandulena⁸ at Nasik are completely free from wooden additions to their frontage. Their facades, although simple, maintain a certain rhythm and harmony of form and proportions. It is interesting to note that the columns in the early cave temples are plain, octagonal and have neither bases nor capitals. But at Karle, the octagonal pillars of the interior are adorned with both bases and capitals.



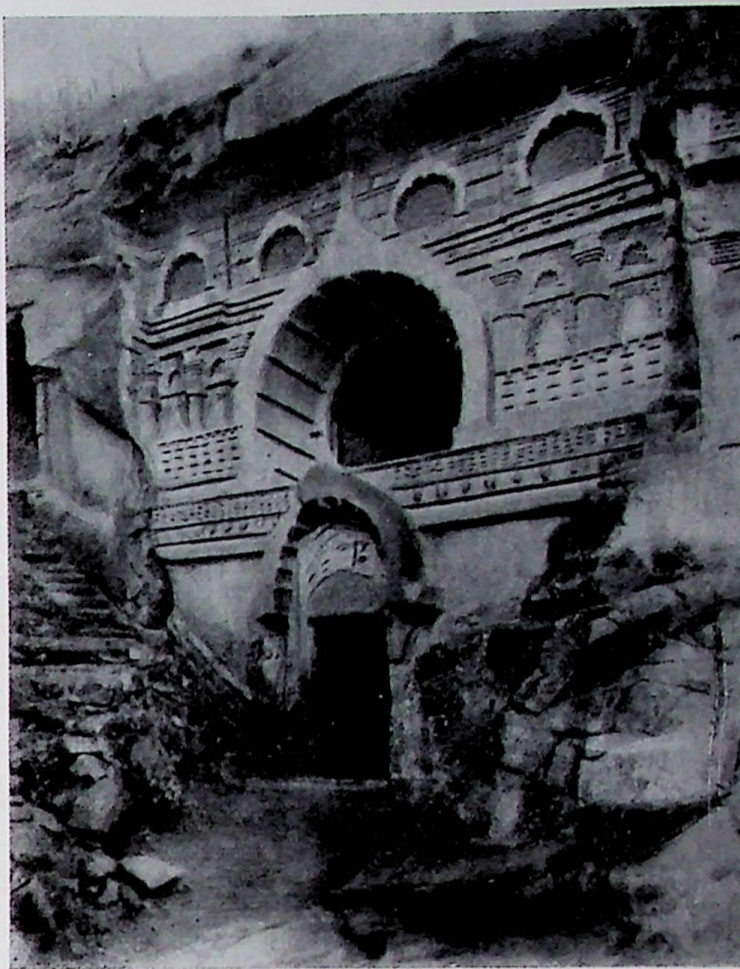
Ajanta: Showing carving of Inner Sanctuary



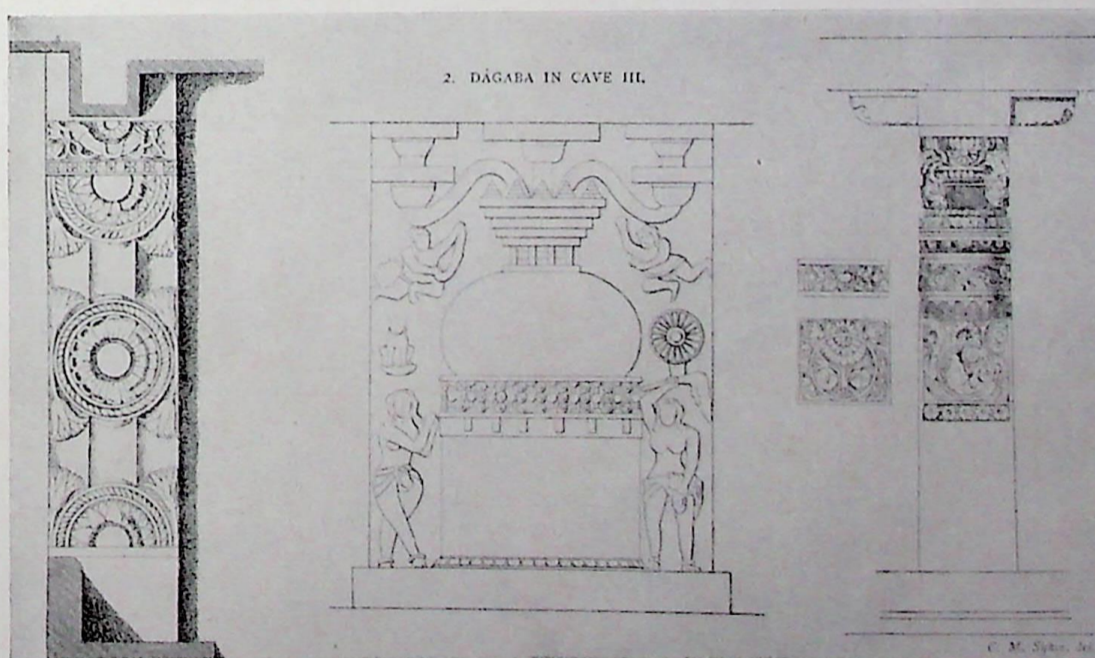
Ajanta: Plan of the Chaitya. Cave No. IX



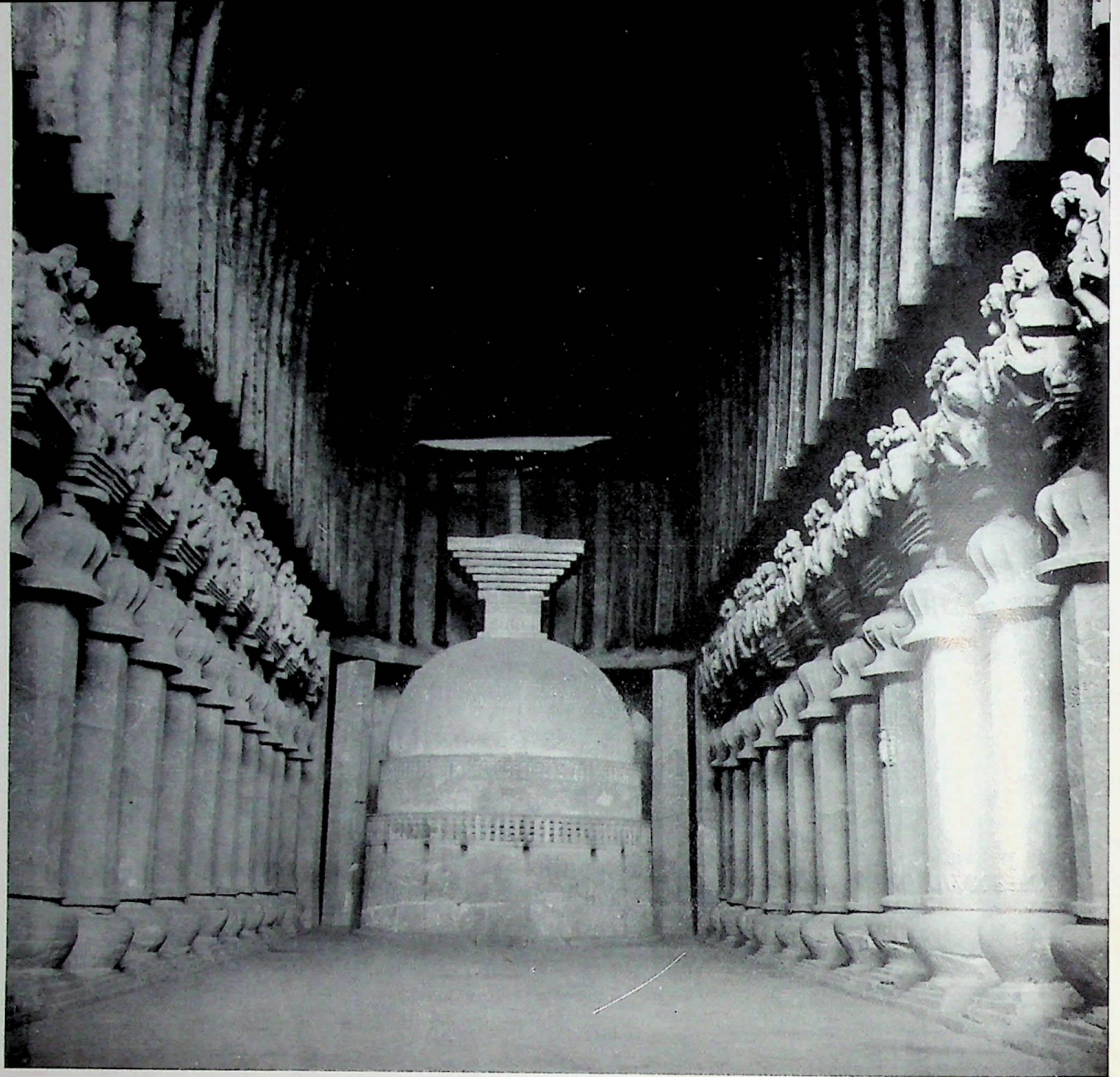
Nasik: Cave XVIII. Showing carving of Inner Sanctuary



Nasik: Cave XVIII. Outer Gate



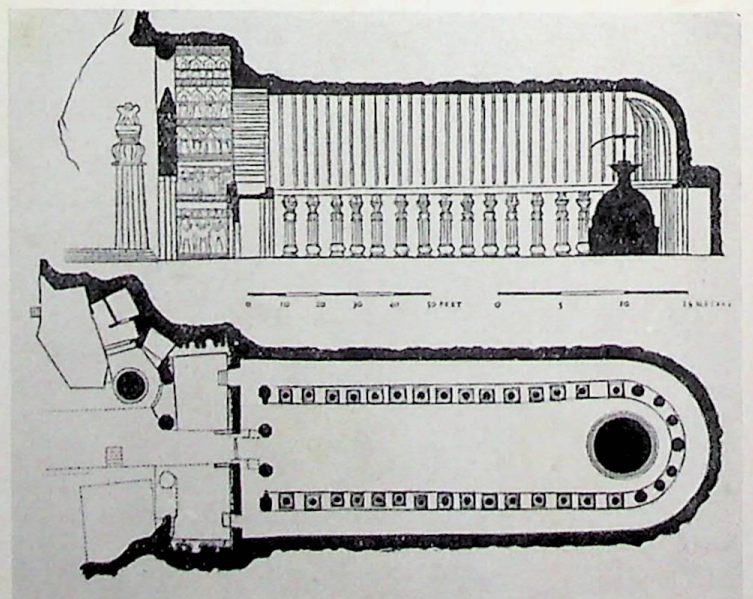
Nasik: Dagaba in Cave III



Karle: Inner Sanctuary of Cave Temple

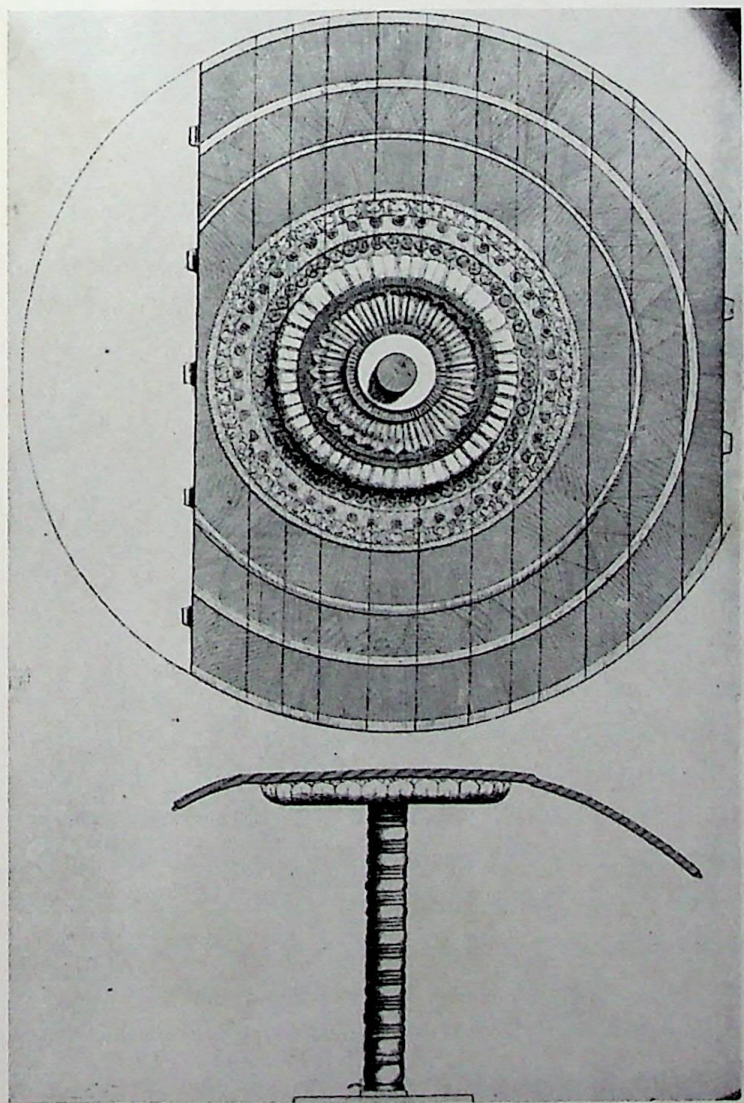
KARLE

The Chaitya at Karle⁹ is the largest and the finest of the Western Indian cave temples and shows a great advancement over the earlier rock-cut monuments. The general dimensions of the main hall are 124 feet, 3 inches, in length by 45 feet, 6 inches, in width, and 45 feet, in height¹⁰. Fifteen octagonal pillars on each side separate the nave from the side aisles and each pillar stands on a base which is formed of a plain vase placed on a square gradated pedestal. Their shafts are crowned with lotiform bell with a small cushion motif (amalaka type) between this and an inverted pyramid surmounted by groups of elephants with human riders. The bell-shaped capital is the old Persepolitan motif frequently used in Maurya period (Third–Second Centuries B.C.). Before the



Karle: Chaitya Hall. Plan and Elevation

main entrance of the Chaitya two lion-columns (Simhasthambha) symmetrically stand with capitals of completely Maurya tradition, i.e. a lotiform ball capital surmounted by two pairs of lions crossing each other. A striking innovation at Karle can be remarked on the facade of the cave itself. It is the rock-cut screen under the arch of the horse-shoe Chaitya window. The earlier caves had the screen in wood.



Karle: The Chhatra or Umbrella



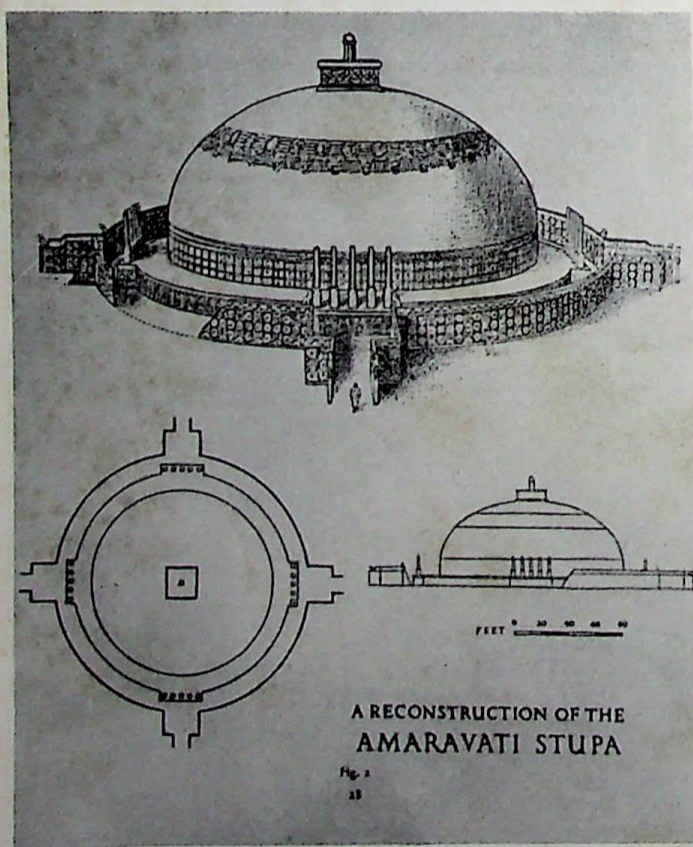
Karle: Detail of Pillar showing Mithuna Couple

NASIK, KANHERI

The most important caves of Nasik group¹¹ are: (a) Nahapana Vihara (cave No. 8), (b) Gautamiputra Vihara (cave No. 3) and (c) Sri Yajna Vihara (cave No. 15). Their general plan is the same and provides a simple development of the original rock-cut Vihara, a square pillarless chamber with cells cut in the rock in three interior sides. At first sight they appear the same as those seen at Junnar. But an analysis of the different decorative elements of the pillar makes it clear that they are in the style of Karle. However, some minor improvements in the decorative system of the capitals indicate that they are posterior to the Chaitya pillars at Karle. Thus the columns of some of the early Nasik caves, including the Nahapana Vihara, show the "cushion" motif between the bell shaped capital and the inverted pyramid supporting criss-crossed animals with their riders. The Gautamiputra Vihara has pillars with similar capitals but, for the first time, displaying small human figures placed on the four corners around the "cushion" motif. The Sri Yajna Vihara is executed in the same style as the preceding caves. Since the first and the last two caves bear inscriptions of a Saka and two Satavahana kings, they throw light on the



Kanheri: Detail of Architecture



Amaravati: Reconstruction of the Stupa

growth and interaction of Saka-Satavahana kingdoms in western India¹². The difference of time between these three Viharas cannot be very great, and it is probable that they were excavated within the last 80 years of the Second Century A.D.

Since the cave No. 3 at Kanheri also bears an inscription referring to the region of Sri Yajna Satakarni, the last Satavahana king who ruled over Western Maharashtra, it would belong to the same period as the Nasik cave No. 15. According to the inscription, the Kanheri cave No. 3 was begun by two brothers, Gajasena and Gajamitra, in the reign of Gautamiputra Sri Yajna Satakarni¹³. This is one of the last early Buddhist caves of Western India. Some of the caves of the Hinayana series were later altered by Buddhists of the Mahayana sect, which in the Second Century A.D., had as one of their main strongholds the eastern Satavahana capital, Amaravati.



Bhaja: Verandah Relief: Surya, on his Chariot

SCULPTURE

The earliest figure sculpture of the Satavahana period are found in the Nanaghat caves (c. 1 cen. B.C.), which undoubtedly provide the first examples of portrait sculpture in India¹⁴). There are seven inscribed figures bearing names of members of the Satavahana family. The persons commemorated are: Raya Simuka Satavahana (the first king of the dynasty), Devi Nayanika, Sri Satakarni, Kumara Bhaya, Maharathi Tranakayiro, Kumara Hakusiri and Kumar Satavahana. The sculpture, although more evolved, shows continuation of Bharhut-Sanchi style (2-1 cen. B.C.).

The Bhaja sculpture which includes the five-armed

figures in niches on the east side of the hall on the verandah wall, and two reliefs depicting Surya on his chariot and Indra on the elephant Airavata,¹⁵ could roughly be attributed to the same period as the Nanaghat royal portrait sculptures. Certain motifs, like male and female head-dresses, and some ornaments, like necklaces, show relationship between the Bharhut and Bhaja sculptures. But, for the handling of complicated compositions of crowded figures, and their relatively much freer movement, the Bhaja sculptures show posteriority to those at Bharhut. The relief depicting Indra on an elephant represents a vigour and



Bhaja: Verandah Relief: Indra, over the court of an Earthly King, 1st Century B.C.

a majesty comparable to the victory stela of the ancient Accadian king Naram-Sin (3rd millenium B.C.).

The first two centuries of the Christian era, when a number of the Western Indian cave temples were executed, are highly important for the evolution of sculpture. At this time, in the north there was a well established school of art at Mathura which, on the one hand, derived inspiration from the older schools of Bharhut and Sanchi, and on the other, had close connections with the Graeco-Buddhist school of Gandhara. A number of classical motifs frequently

found among the Gandhara sculptures were also adopted by the Mathura artists. And through the extension of Mathura influence they are seen as far as Amaravati in the south-east.

The sculptures of the Western Indian cave temples of the Satavahana period are dominantly influenced by the contemporary Mathura school of the "Kushana period" (1 and 2 cen. A.D.). Stylistically, the Indian ivories found in Begram (Afghanistan), may also be grouped with these sculptures. The ancient city of Vidisa (modern Bhilsa) lay a few miles to the north of Sanchi, and was well known for its ivory workers who must have been exporting their ivory products to distant lands. Curiously enough an Indian ivory representing a woman (Yakshi?) found in Pompeii (Italy) bears the characteristic features of the Yakshis of the Sanchi gateways¹⁶. Could it be attributed to the ivory workers of Vidisa who are also mentioned on the southern gateway¹⁷ of the Sanchi Stupa? For the first time, the excavations done by J. Mackin¹⁸ in 1937 at Begram brought the ivories of Indian origin into focus. The most recent study of these ivories by M. Philippe Stern¹⁹ make clear that they can only be attributed to the Mathura school of art of the Kushana period.



Mithuna Couple on horse-back, top of pillar, Gateway at Bedsa



*Dancing Figures from Karle:
Courtesy of Archaeological Survey, Aurangabad*



*Dancing Figures from Kondane:
Courtesy of Archaeological Survey, Aurangabad*



*Dancing Figures from Kondane:
Courtesy of Archaeological Survey, Aurangabad*



Karle: Dancing Figures from facade
(Drawing by K. K. Hebbar)

It has been said that the early Indian artists copied the existing wooden models of architecture and sculpture on to stone. That is true of the early Indian architecture, such as the rock-cut temples of Western India. But to conclude that the early Indian sculpture is derived from wood-cutting is to discredit the well trained stone-cutters who created remarkable sculptures. As has been observed by Prof. Codrington²⁰, the early Indian artists were well versed in the normal technique of stone-cutting with chisels and finishing with a point. It is probably due to the finishing process of the early Indian sculpture that it gives an impression of wood-work.

We have already noticed that the early caves of Western India are practically devoid of sculpture. The reliefs of Bhaja and the Nanaghat figures of the Satavahana family members are some of the few examples of rock-cut sculpture of the early period. The most representative sculptures of the Satavahana period at Karle are the figures of couples representing donors²¹. They are robust and majestic and are characterised by plump curvaceousness of the body. The female figures

are marked with a smiling expression and the tribhanga (triple flexion) movement of the body. Their over-large hips are decorated with a broad and richly worked girdle loosely strung around the hips, and their feet are decorated with massive round ornaments. An abundance of bracelets and ear-rings are common to both men and women. Their drapery is so transparent that except the falls, and in the case of men, the rope like belt, nothing else is visible. A number of these decorative motives of human figures and their rich head-dresses show close affinity between Karle and Mathura sculptures of pre-Kushana period (c. 1 cen. B.C.).

The Karle tradition of representing donor couples is maintained at Kanheri²². Mathura remains their common source of inspiration. But the Kanheri sculptures show an appreciable advancement over Karle and form a class of their own. They are marked with a change in the treatment of drapery, which is no more as transparent as it is seen at Karle. The ear ornaments of men and women at Kanheri are much bigger in proportion to the size of their faces. The female figures wear flat metallic belts which are placed higher on the hips. The smiling expression is no more there. Lastly, the massiveness and majesty of Karle figures is not to be seen at Kanheri. Since the Kanheri-Chaitya was executed during the reign of King Sri Yajna Satakarni, the sculptures of this cave can be dated towards the end of the 2nd cen. A.D.

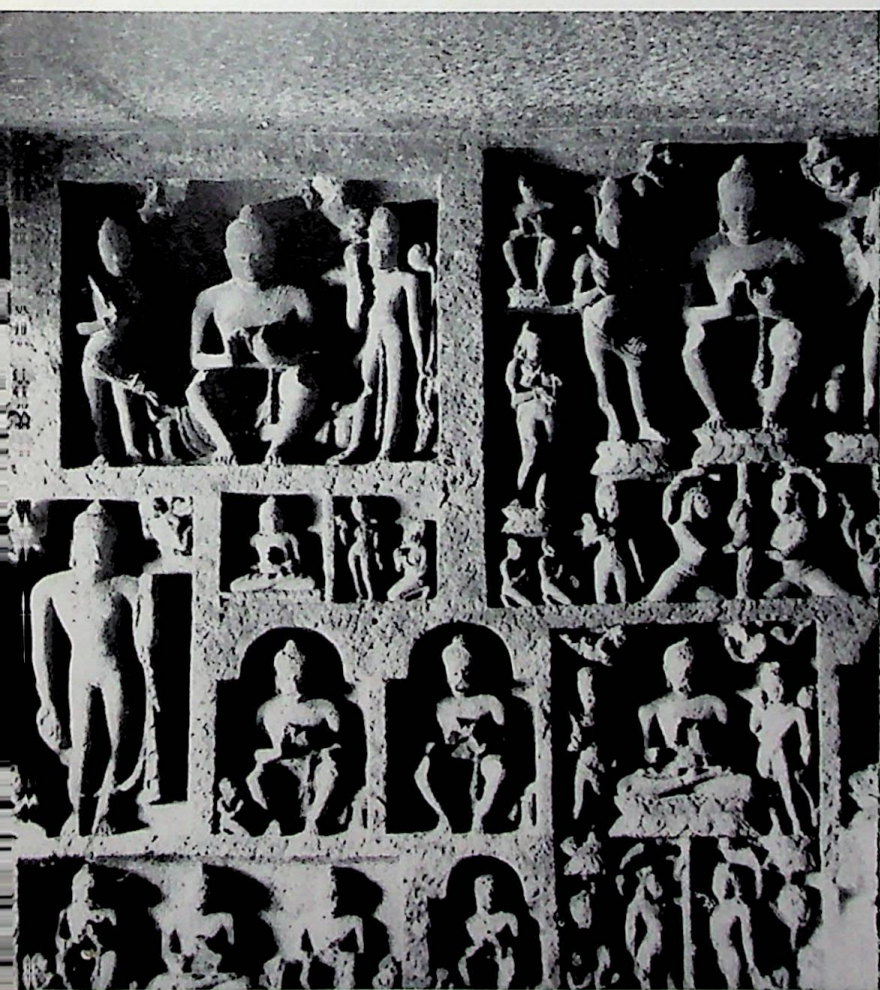


Mithuna Couples on elephants from pillars in Karle, Chaitya Cave

(Drawing by K. K. Hebbar)

SANCHI AND AMARAVATI

It is important to note that the bulk of the Sanchi and Amaravati sculptures were executed under the patronage of the Satavahana kings. These two great centres of Buddhism produced sculptures of high quality covering a long period of about four centuries (c. 1 cen. B.C.—c. 3 cen. A.D.). Taken as a whole they provide a wonderful gallery covering the most important formative period of Indian art. Like Bharhut, the Sanchi sculptures are highly narrative in character. Nature and the animal world play an important role in the reliefs of the Sanchi gateways. The artist avoids completely the anthropomorphic representation of the Buddha. He chooses only symbols for indicating the presence of the Master in his plastic compositions. The early Amaravati sculptures follow this convention faithfully. But the rise of Mahayana Buddhism in the 2nd century A.D. put an end to the old practice, and the Buddha figures were created in Gandhara and Mathura. The later Amaravati monuments were inspired by the new Buddhist doctrines and introduced the Buddha figure.



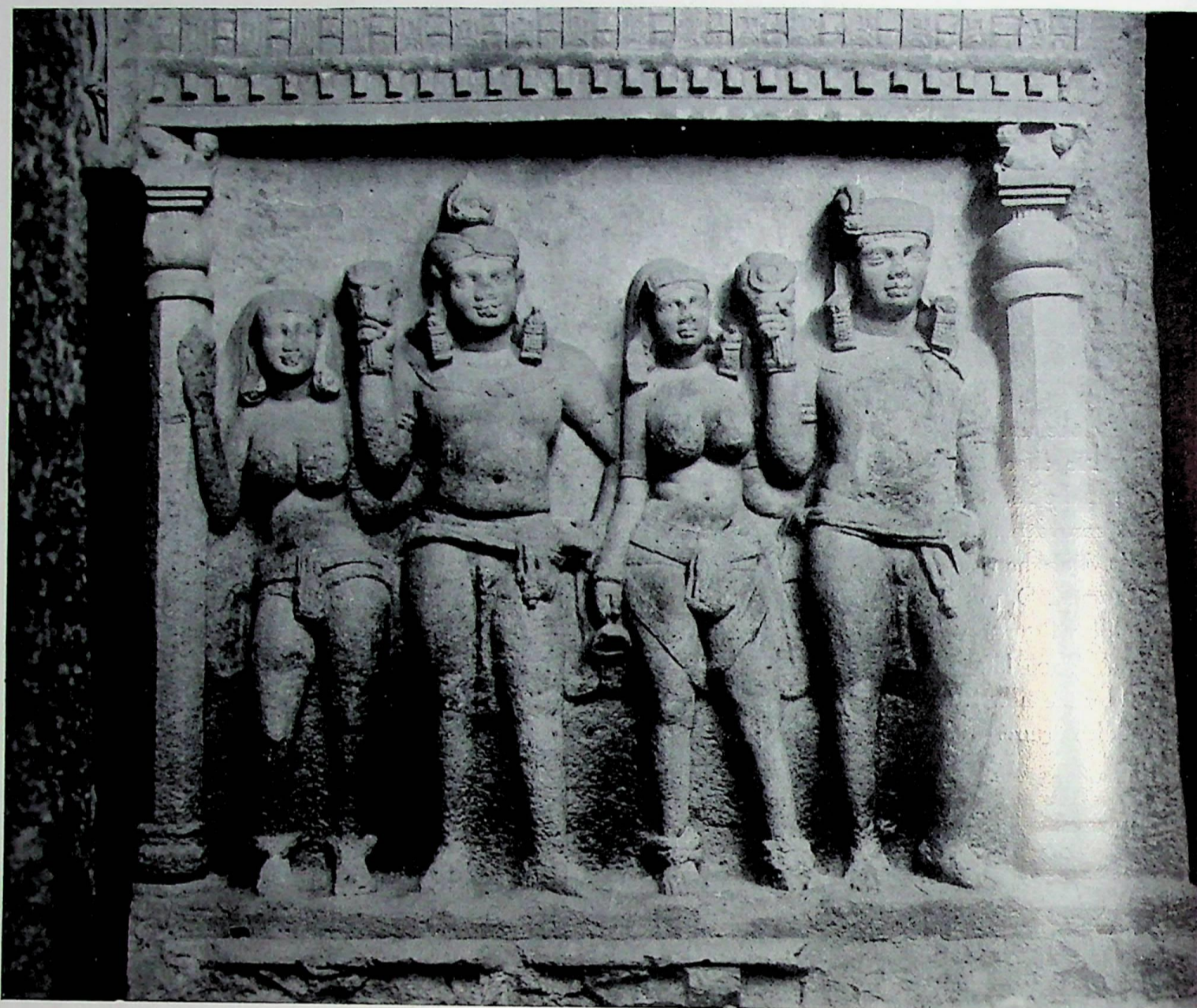
Relief showing Buddha from Kanheri



Bodhisattva from Kanheri

SANCHI

The earliest monuments of the Sanchi group, which provide us some examples of figure sculpture, are the medallions and the vertical panels of the balustrade²³ posts of Stupa 2. They usually consist of scenes or single human figures. The compositions are executed flat indicating only one plane and show primitive elements and technical naivety, such as were shown in human figures with feet almost always in the side view even when the position of the body did not correspond to it. A comparative study of the reliefs of Sanchi Stupa 2 and Bharhut, make us believe that the former are at least as old as the latter. There are, however, reliefs on the Sanchi Stupa 2 which resemble the sculptures of the great stupa gateways, but they can only be taken as later additions to the old balustrade.



Mithuna Couples in Kanheri

ABBREVIATION:

A.S.W.I. Archaeological Survey of Western India.

NOTES:

¹cf. Coomaraswamy A.K., *History of Indian and Indonesian Art*, London 1927, p. 23.

²For plates see Coomaraswamy, *op. cit.*, Pl. IX and X, Codrington K. de B., *Ancient India*, London 1926, Pl. IV and V.

³Smith V. A., *History of Fine Arts in India and Ceylon* (edited by K. de B. Codrington) p. 27.

⁴Coomaraswamy, *op. cit.*, Pl. IX.

⁵A.S.W.I., vol. IV, p. 10. See also Percy Brown, *Indian Architecture (Buddhist and Hindu)* Bombay 1942, Pl. XVIII, Figs. 1 and 2.

⁶Coomaraswamy, *op. cit.*, Pl. X, Figs. 32 and 33.

⁷Percy Brown, *op. cit.*, p. 28-29.

⁸*ibid.* Pl. XXVIII. A.

⁹Coomaraswamy, *op. cit.*, Pl. X, Figs. 34 and 35.

One of the Karle inscriptions records the gift of the "most excellent rock-mansion in Jambudvīpa" (India) by Seth Bhutapala from Vaijayanti, obviously the chief donor of the cave. Two other inscriptions speak of Valuraka, which has been identified by Burgess as the original name of the monastic establishment at Karle. See A.S.W.I., IV, p. 90.

¹⁰Fergusson J., *History of Indian and Eastern Architecture*, London, 1910, vol. I, p. 145.

¹¹Codrington, *op. cit.*, Pl. V, Fig. C; VII, Fig. B; VIII, Fig. B.

¹²The date of Gautamiputra Sri Satakarni uprooting the Kshaharata family of Nahapana corresponds with the 46th year of the Saka era, i.e. 124 A.D. cf. A.S.W.I., IV, Nasik inscription no. 13.

¹³A.S.W.I., V, p. 75 f.

¹⁴cf. Aravamuthan T. G., *Portrait sculpture in South India*, London 1931, p. 3.

According to Buhler (A.S.W.I., V, p. 65) the scripts of the Nanaghat inscriptions and those at Sanchi are close to each other. Historical evidence shows that the gateways of the Sanchi stupa were executed during the early Satavahana period. If we accept c. 73 B.C. as the Satavahanas coming to power, the Sanchi gateways should be ascribed towards the beginning of the Christian era.

¹⁵Coomaraswamy, *op. cit.*, Pl. VII and VIII.

¹⁶See Stern Ph.: *Nouvelles Recherches Archeologiques a Begram*, Paris 1954, Figs. 567-569.

¹⁷Marshall J., *The Monuments of Sanchi*, Bombay 1939, vol. I, p. 35 f.

¹⁸*Recherches Archeologiques a Begram*, 1937.

¹⁹*op. cit.*, p. 20 f.

²⁰*Art of India and Pakistan* (edited by Sir Leigh Ashton) p. 12, London 1948.

²¹Codrington, *op. cit.*, Pl. VI, Figs. A and B.

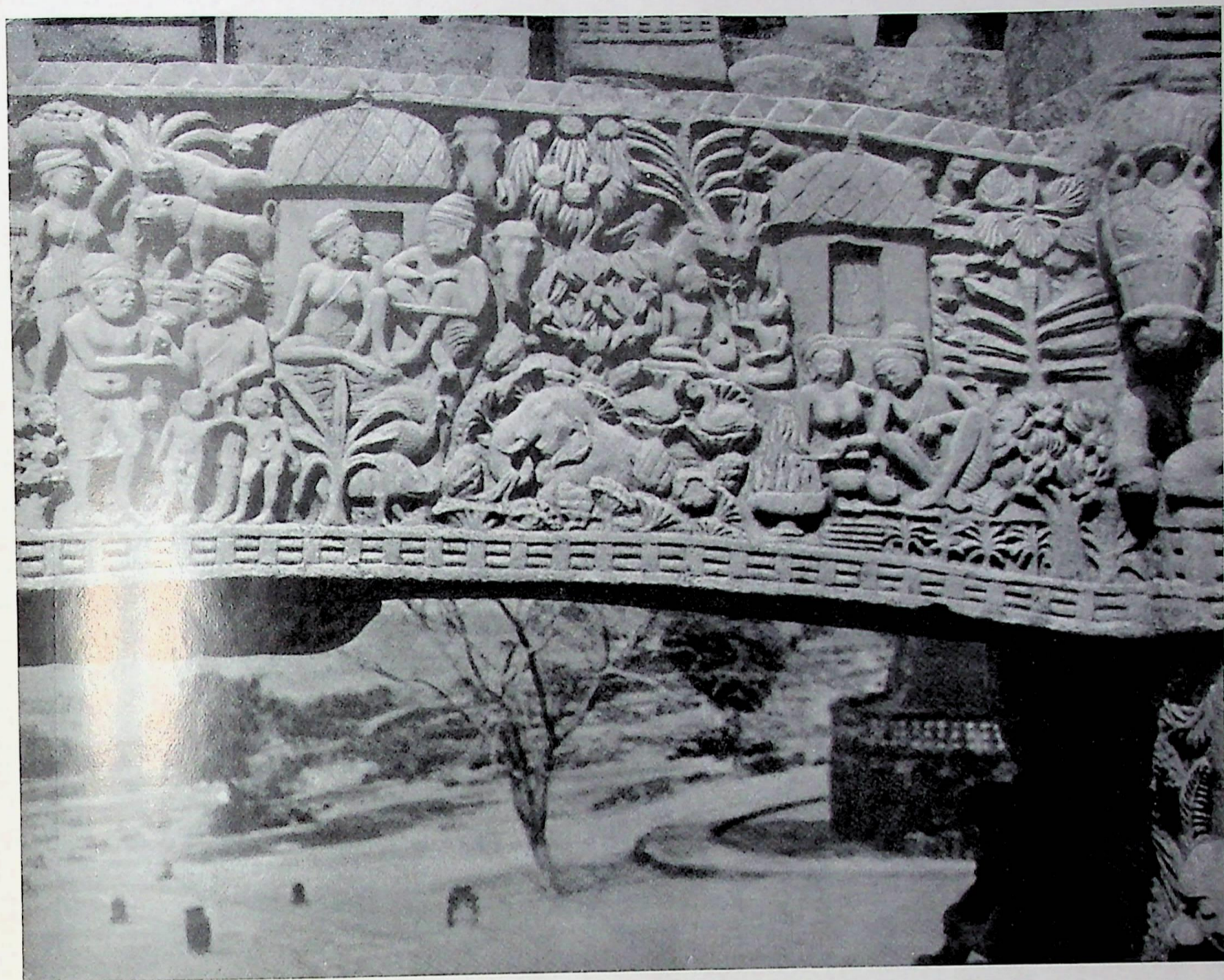
²²See Coomaraswamy, *op. cit.*, Pl. XXXI.



Sanchi: Yakshi embracing tree, East Gate, Great Stupa. 1st Century B.C.



*Visvantara Jataka, left half of middle section of lowest beam of North Gate,
Great Stupa, Sanchi. 1st Century B.C.*



*Visvantara Jataka, right half of middle section of lowest beam of North Gate,
Great Stupa, Sanchi, 1st Century B.C.*

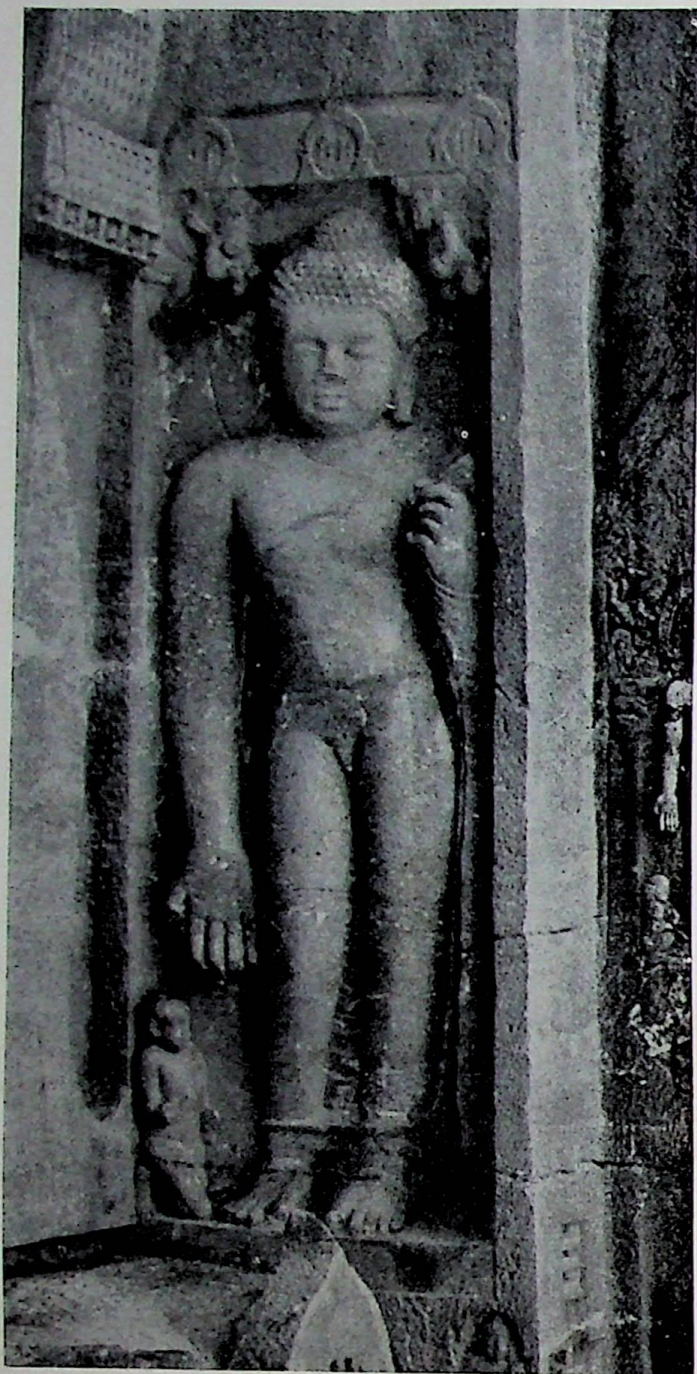
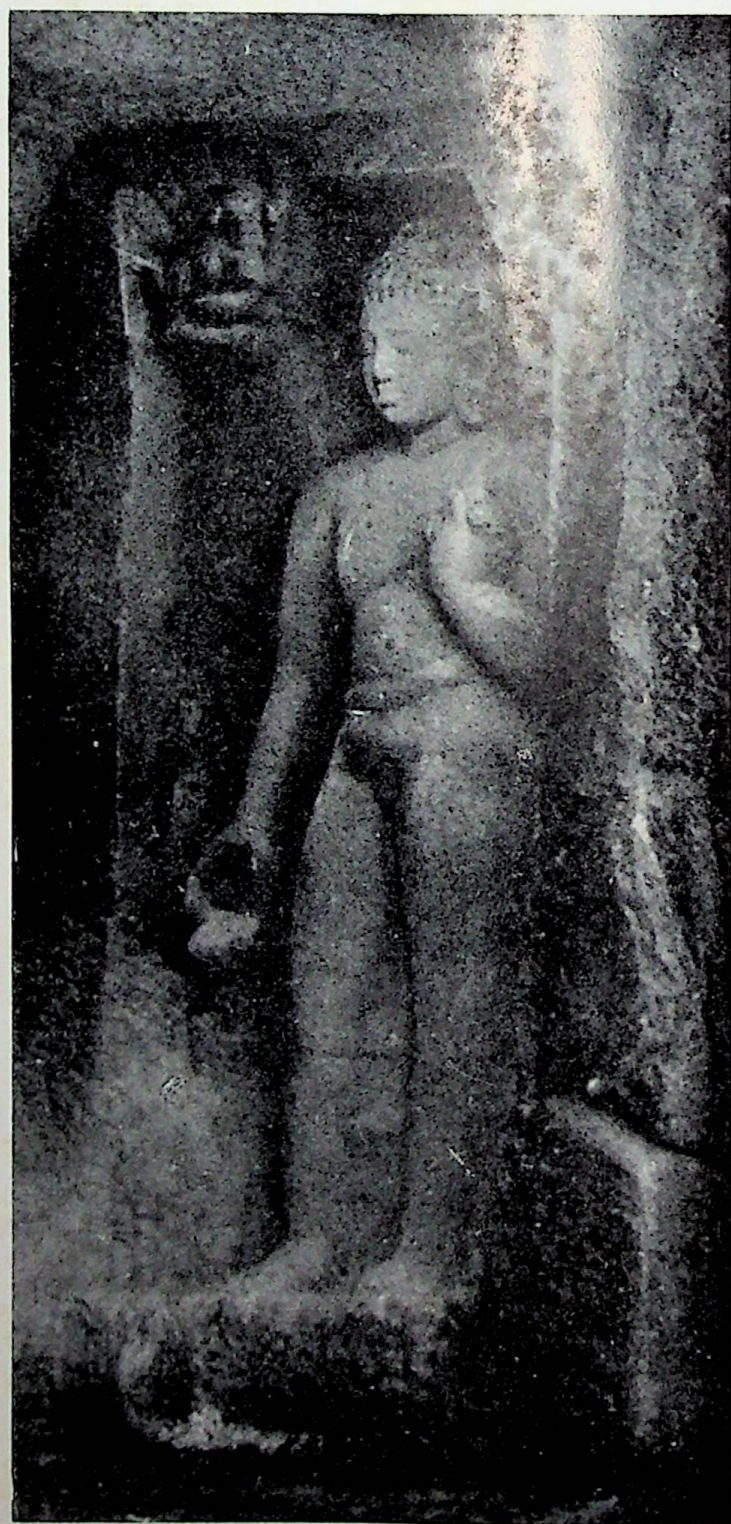


Figure from facade, Ajanta

Figure from facade, Ajanta





Drum slab from relief in Amaravati. Early Phase



Rail coping. Early Phase, Amaravati



Slab supporting lion. Early Phase, Amaravati



Slab supporting lion. Early Phase, Amaravati

Reflections On Two Reliefs in Bhaja

by E. H. Johnston



The problem raised by the sculptures in the Cave Temples of Western India have not yet received substantial attention to justify any final conclusions about exact dates, contents and styles. Marg reproduces here, a note by E. H. Johnston, which may help to pave the way for further analysis of the problems raised by the carvings.

A scholar often finds it difficult to know whether or not to publish an idea for which adequate proof is lacking. However much he emphasizes the conjectural nature of his suggestion, the next authority to take up the question is as likely as not to ignore his reservations and to pour scorn on him for treating an ill-advised guess as a well ascertained fact. But sometimes a worse fate awaits him; his idea will be accepted by his successors and, despite the absence of proof, will harden into a dogma, to challenge which will be regarded as propogating heinously heretical views. In subjects where working hypotheses are a necessity for further progress, these risks have to be

incurred, but surely this argument does not apply to iconography and the present writer fails to see what advantage is gained from putting a purely baseless label to some work of art in order to provide it with a name. For instance, it will probably soon be reckoned heterodox not to agree that a certain statue at Bodhgaya represents Indra as Santi, though the name of Santi as the grasscutter who provided Buddha with his seat as well as his identification with Indra appear for the first time in the legends many centuries after the statue was carved¹. Or again consider the heterogeneous mass of scenes, which are now styled the Great Miracle of Sravasti; that title I venture to think is correct at best in only a small proportion of cases. But in a world which prefers a wrong explanation to none at all, the expression of doubts and hesitations is futile, and the sceptic is best advised to hold his hand, unless he has a convincing alternative to offer. With these considerations in mind I propose to discuss here the subjects of two well-known reliefs at Bhaja, taking first that which is generally said to represent Surya in his chariot; a different interpretation has long seemed

obvious to me, but the proof eluded me till I had an opportunity of examining Dr. Kramrisch's photographs and going through the details with her.

The early iconography of Surya is now fairly well-established, and I need only draw attention to certain points. The images which can be dated to periods before 600 A.D., fall into five classes. First, there are the standing statues of Surya, usually holding a lotus in each hand which is uplifted in the fashion which the Rigveda describes as characteristic of Savitr (Macdonell, *Vedic Mythology*, 32); he has no chariot, but is attended by Pingala and Dandin. The standard example is at Bhumara (Mem. A.S.I., 16, pl. XIVa); a similar one from Niyamatpur in Bengal is published by S. K. Sarasvati in the Journ. Dept. of Letters, Calc. Univ., XXX, Fig. 1, and the Indian Institute at Oxford has another rendering of the same theme, which appears rather crude from the loss of its original stucco covering. The second class from Mathura, shows the Sun-god in a squatting posture with Pingala and Dandin (Vogel, *sculpture de Mathura*, pl. XXXIIIb whose description, p. 46, does not mention the two subordinate figures); the Indian Institute has recently been given another version of this motif, which can be identified from the exact coincidence of the squatting deity with that in the next class. It is not clear whether either of these examples had originally representations of horses on the base. The other three classes all have Surya on his chariot, firstly squatting alone in the composition which seems peculiar to the Mathura school (Vogel, *op cit*, pl. XXXVIIIa, and similar examples in the Indian Institute and elsewhere), secondly seated either with or without Pingala and Dandin in certain reliefs from Afghanistan (Mem. Del. Arch. Fr. en Afghanistan, VII, Col de Khair Khaneh, by J. Hackin, Figs. 17 and 31),² thirdly standing in a chariot with attendant goddesses, of which the earliest known example is at Bodhgaya (Coomaraswamy, *sculpture de Bodhgaya*, pl. XXXIII) and one in the Ananta Gumpha, Orissa (inset on p. 7). I have not seen V. Smith's description of a later one in *Ostasiatische Zeitschrift*, III.

As regards the first, second and fourth class, the origin of the two attendants on the sun is discussed in a suggestive manner by Hackin in the memoir quoted and had its importance for dating. He associates them with the Dioscuri and other parallel pairs of attendants on the sun, found especially in the Nearer East, but this does not account for Pingala carrying the pen and inkhorn, which can only be related to the recording of, and judgment on, the actions of the dead, not merely to the functions of the psychopompus. It looks rather

as if we were concerned with Mithra in his function as recorder and judge, and I note that Dandin's method of holding the spear recalls strikingly the attitude of the dadophorus on the Mithraic reliefs, who holds his torch upright, though it is less easy to equate Pingala's attitude with that of the dadophorus who holds his torch downwards. This suggested relationship receives perhaps some corroboration from my second class, where the god holds his sword in his left hand and a curious pestle-like object in his right; the latter may be meant to represent a torch, and, if so, we have on these statues the two characteristics of Mithra on the known reliefs, his sword and torch. On this line of argument, the second is the earliest of these three classes, which would illustrate the process by which the statues of Mithra, when introduced into India, were gradually transformed into those of Surya. But the theory, however, attractive, should not be accepted, till Mithra reliefs are available from Iran preferably Eastern Iran, for comparison. This possibility combines with the indications of styles to make me believe that none of the statues which include Pingala and Dandin are earlier than the fourth century A.D. and that some of them are materially later.

One characteristic, it should be observed, unites the last three classes namely, that the horses are shown, not abreast but drawn apart to each side, so as to make it apparent that the chariot has a single wheel. This method of representation has led to some misconception, for by it the sculptors were unable to show all seven horses which draw the chariot. Sometimes two, sometimes four, sometimes six horses (e.g. in the Mathura relief of my third class in the Indian Institute) can be seen, but it must not, therefore, be inferred that Surya was ever held to have less than seven horses, but only that the disposition of the figures made it impossible to indicate the presence of seven steeds; the device by which this difficulty was overcome in later times is well known. The further point should be noted that Surya, whatever his posture may be, is invariably shown in the centre of the chariot.

Now consider the Bhaja relief (Pl. 1) in the light of the above statements. In the first place the chariot has two wheels and is drawn by four horses abreast; these facts alone are sufficient in my view to negative the identification with Surya. In the chariot are standing three deities of more or less equal size, which fact alone prevents us from equating them with Surya, Pingala and Dandin, even if the early date of the relief were not a strong argument against that assumption. The central position is occupied by the charioteer. The chariot is being driven over a

mis-shapen monster with his feet turned the wrong way, who has been identified as Rahu; this is impossible, not so much because he is shown with his head not severed from his body, a legend which may not have been known at so early a date,³ but because the relief goes around the corner (Pls. 1 & 2) and shows a number more of similar monsters. Those who like the far-fetched may be tempted to think of the passage in *Taittiriya Aranyaka*, 1, 10, where Sambara engages in battle with Savitr and is defeated; but why should a Brahmanical legend, so little known as not to appear in any other text or even in Macdonell & Keith's *Vedic Index*, be given one of the principal positions in a Buddhist cave?

So far I have dealt with those points which might be held to have some relation with Surya, but there is more in the relief with which to reckon, before any particular identification can be accepted. The chariot is travelling in the air, at the bottom a bird's head peeps out on alarm (Pls. 1 & 2) and further up, though invisible in most reproductions, is another bird or two (Pl. 2). It was the presence of the birds which I had overlooked in the photographs available to me, and every Buddhist scholar who reads this paper will probably realise at once that I had always taken this scene to represent the war between Sakka and the Asuras as told in *Samyuttanikaya*, 1, 224-225. The earlier 'vaggas' of this work contain a number of legends in decidedly antique form, some of which, such as of the campaigns of the Gods against the Asuras are of pre-Buddhist origin. This particular story is stated to have happened in the past but is not treated as a Jataka, though later on it was included in the standard Jataka collections, appearing in the *Sakrajataka* No. 9 of Sura's *Jatakamala*, and as an incident in the *Kulavakajataka*, No. 31 of the *Pali Jatakas*. The slight differences between the various versions are irrelevant for my purpose, the essential point being that Sakra, fighting in his chariot against the Asuras had occasion to take a course that would have cut off some 'salmali' trees in which garuda birds were nesting. In order to save the lives of the birds and their nestlings, he directed Matali to take the hazardous step of turning the chariot back, and the Asuras, thinking from this movement that he had received reinforcements, fled in terror. It was this episode which has been chosen for representation in the relief.

Having regard to the early date of the cave and to the subjects of the other sculptures, I doubt whether we are meant to see a Jataka in this scene; more probably the sculpture is following the *Samyutta* story or the version of it known to him in his canon, and

has chosen it as a suitable setting for the representation of Sakra. This point is of some importance, when we turn to the relief (Pl. 1) on the opposite side of the door, since it does not appear to be applicable from any of the *Pali Jatakas*. To save misunderstanding, let me make it clear that I do not claim finality in the solution I put forward here, but I think that, if certain points are brought out, it may enable someone else to find a more appropriate canonical passage than that I cite. In the first place, if I am right in holding that the other scene illustrates, not the *Sakrajataka*, but the original tale of the *Samyuttanikaya*, one would expect to find in this one a deity shown in the action of some well-known story about him. The central figure is a deity mounted on an elephant, which is moving through the air, not on the ground, and is, therefore, a divine elephant. Its size is vast in comparison with the human beings depicted in the relief. The most noticeable thing about the god is an enormous wreath, which hangs from his neck and is grasped by his left hand; in his right hand, he holds what seems to be an 'ankusa'. An attendant seated behind him on the elephant holds a pennant, which is surmounted by an ornament of the type known as 'nandipada', and two shafts whose tops look like leaves. The attendant's head-dress has an erection built up on it which has some resemblance to an enormous flower. Who is the deity? It is no more necessary to identify every god on an elephant with Indra, than it is to equate every god in a chariot with Surya. The obvious suggestion to my mind is Mara depicted as Kamadeva; we know from *Buddhacarita*, XIII, that the identity of the two was generally accepted by the first century A.D. and one might compare the terracotta from Mathura (*Ann. Bibl. of Ind. Arch.* IX pl. IVd) which shows Kamadeva with a wreath, though a smaller one. The attendant would then be carrying the flower arrows and the flag, which causes Asvaghosa to call Mara by the name *Puspakete* (*Buddhacarita*, XIII, 72)⁴. But this identification, unavoidable though it seems, raises several difficulties. Why should Mara, even though treated by Buddhism as on the same plane as the other gods, be depicted here, when one should expect something more edifying as a pendant to Indra's good deed? And if it is Mara, what is the scene represented?

I can only propose as a solution that we should see a reference in the relief to *Samyuttanikaya*, 1, 103-104, the second of the *Marasamyuttas*, in which Mara created the form of a gigantic elephant to frighten the Buddha, when soon after the Enlightenment he was sitting in the open air on the bank of the *Neranjara* under the *Ajapalanigrodha*. The *Pali* text,

"mahantam hatthirajavannam abhinimminitya", strictly translated, would require us to suppose that the elephant was not merely a form which Mara took on, as Geiger's rendering (1. 162) has it, but that he produced the form separately from his own, (see Anderson and Helmer Smith, Pali Dictionary, 'abhinimminati'); if this is correct, Mara might be represented as sitting on the back of the elephant. The relief shows at the bottom below the elephant a tree set in a railing, surmounted by an umbrella and possibly covered with garlands or streamers, on one side of it, women with one or more cows, and on the other two richly dressed people on cane seats (cf. Vogel, op. cit., pl. XXXIVb) and other persons. Above the latter is another larger tree in a railing, with figures, presumably deities flying round and above it, while the elephant holds a third tree in his trunk, as if he had just torn it up in his rage; a being also possibly a deity, is holding on to this tree. Some minor details are not clear to me on the photograph, but it is not

impossible to interpret the whole as a rendering of the scene mentioned above, taking the trees in railings to be the Bodhi tree and the Nigrodha, the women to be Nandabala and her followers and the men to be the Gopa chief and his attendants. Whether this suggestion is sound or not I am unable to determine with any certainty, and it would certainly be desirable that the next competent person who visits the cave should examine the relief with care and report its contents fully, as conclusions drawn from the photographs are exposed to error from misapprehension of the details.

¹For the legends see L. Scherman, *Der Schritter und die Erleuchtong Buddhas* in "A Volume of Eastern & Indian Studies" (F. W. Thomas Festschrift, Bombay 1939).

²The single figure of the Mathura School, *ib.*, Fig. 34 belongs to the first class apparently. An isolated figure of Pingala has also been found at Mathura (J. U. P. Hist. Soc., 1937, p. 90 & Pl. 11, Fig. 5), but from the attitude it must originally have formed part of a larger composition.

³From *Brhatsammith*, V, it may be inferred that there are several forms in which Rahu might be expected to appear.

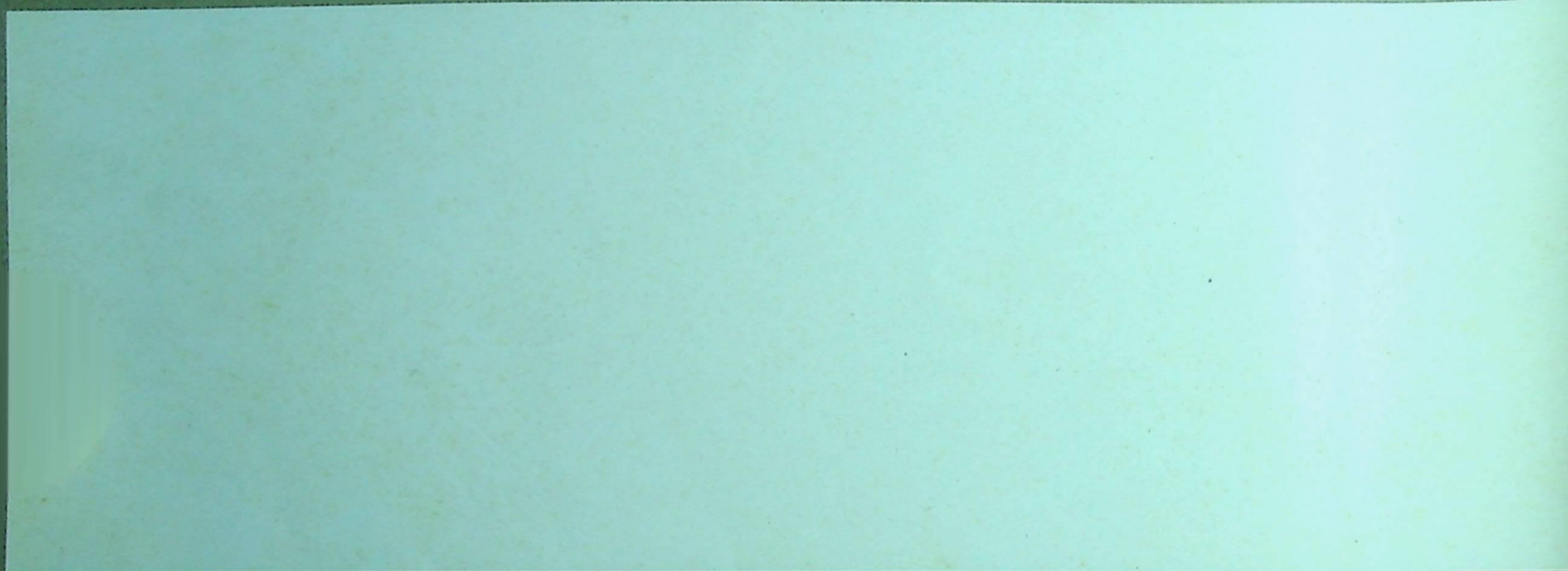
⁴The only other occurrence of this name in Buddhist literature known to me is at *Gandistotra*, 8, it is applied to Kamadeva at *MBh*, XVI, 16172.



The Buddha. Cave X.



Naga King before Bodhi Tree. Cave X.



Naga King before Bodhi Tree. Cave X.





The Buddha and the one-eyed monk. Cave X.

The Charm of Ajanta

Although this special number of *Marg* has been devoted mainly to the early Buddhist Art through the pre-Mauryan, Mauryan, Sunga and Satavahana periods, it has been found necessary to trace in this issue, some of the motifs, which could be discovered, as the antecedents of the styles perfected under the above mentioned dynasties. Similarly, it has been found necessary, here and there, to show how the influence of the styles, which matured during these periods, precolated into the later art. As will be conceded, chronological exactitude cannot be observed in the exposition of influences. Therefore, we have considered it proper to reproduce here a general article in appreciation of the Charm of Ajanta, with tracings and colour reproductions of the earlier Ajanta caves carved out under the Satavahanas, and which thus more strictly fall within the preview of our special number. Also, Dr. Fabri's article deals with the problems of all the caves rather than only with the earliest caves. This section may, therefore, be considered as a portfolio, recreating the development of Ajanta art, which is the halcyon point of all the stands of achievements, in painting and sculpture, of the first 2,000 years of Indian civilisation and culture, the quintessence of Indian sensibility from the earliest periods to the heyday of the classical perfection reached in the Gupta Empire.

Ajanta is different. It dispenses not power but charm. It works slowly. It does not overwhelm. It grows in upon the visitor. In the faintly lighted viharas and chaityas of Ajanta we first see little. But soon the eye gets used to the darkness and the figures on the walls begin to take shape. There is warmth and there is a wonderful delicacy of feeling here. You look at one corner of the wall. Whose is that lovely face, overcome by ennui?, you wonder. Is she just standing and dreaming? Or is she brooding? And that woman there with a frantic invitation in her half-closed eyes? Who is that? And those elephants sporting in the lotus-pond? And that monkey there with such a compassionate look?

It is some time before the figures become articulate and the pattern of meaning emerges. The guide like a worn-out gramophone record, mechanically repeats the Jataka stories illustrated on the walls. But you wish you had discovered the story yourself and been spared the dull monotony of tone and the raucous, parrot voice. Even the curator, an amiable person otherwise, is more keen to tell the visitors what he told

Mr. C. R. or Mr. N. and this bigwig or that, than to concentrate on the paintings. You wish you were left alone with the pictures on the walls.

Alone with the pictures you begin to sense their beauty. It is not the lovely hair-do's of the women, their elegant jewellery and their supple bodies and exquisite manners that hold you. It is the instinctive fullness of their life that grips. But nothing is reduced to a mere sensation of the retina. The hot welter of physical sensations is always enlivened by intelligence and the delicate voluptuousness always gains a new meaning in the context of the unity of all life. Human emotions are no longer the prerogative of man. They are the inheritance of all animal life.

It is not surprising that these pictures have no frame and that they overflow from one wall to the other with the greatest ease. They are bound together into a whole by the larger unity of meaning. It is always the life of the Buddha as the Sakya prince or in one of his previous births. Even in the illustration of the same story there is no linear progression. The Ajanta artist does not believe in the arbitrary convention of indicating time by the position of the picture in space. Memory gives the sequences their order and unity. Meanwhile, the utter freedom with which the artist disposes of his figures makes for exciting compositions.

I don't know why Mr. Yazdani is at pains to prove that the Ajanta paintings have depth and that the Ajanta artist can often obtain the kind of effect which the Renaissance artists were able to do in Europe. There is no special plastic virtue in creating the illusion of depth. The Ajanta paintings do not strive after such illusion. Neither are they content to exist within the two dimensions of the surface of the wall. They come forward. The Bodhisattva Padmapani—or is it the prince Siddhartha?—in cave I, seems to emerge from the wall and so do the other figures in a lesser degree.

Does it add up to a new philosophy of painting? Perhaps it does. At least Stella Kramrisch is definite on the point. "Aware of ourselves as experiencing the world", she writes, "we turn back upon ourselves as the place which holds the world and there we behold it in a direction that does not lead away from us but points back towards ourselves. We are the stage and the spectator of the world as we see and live in it. There is nothing to lead us away into a distance outside ourselves and there is no room for nostalgia or perspective." This is not entirely true. There may be no room for perspective here. There is certainly some for nostalgia.

The visitor is filled with nostalgia for this vanished world with its thick, fierce darkness of the senses always illumined by a humane philosophy.

What is the mystery that these paintings are trying to penetrate? There is no suggestion here of the hideous rawness of the world of men. There is no face here distorted by pain and despair. There is no hint even of aloneness. It is a world transfigured in the image of Buddhist values to which the artist wholly subscribes but which he did not discover for himself. He has put his art wholly at the service of these values. Like the modern artist he too unloads himself of his personal vision but his visions achieve a focus of meaning only in the context of the Buddhist view of the world.

I have been writing of Ajanta paintings as if they are one whole. In fact they range over many centuries and comprise a whole museum. Their unity is the unity of themes, not of treatment. Already in the Buddha figures of Cave IX and in the dance scene and the narration of Shaddant Jataka in Cave X—the two earliest caves chronologically,—the painters have achieved a maturity which shows centuries of development behind them. In the often over-ornamented figures of the later caves they begin to show the first traces of a decline in taste and a degeneration from a style to a mere stylisation. But even in these it is still an art pregnant with rich meaning.

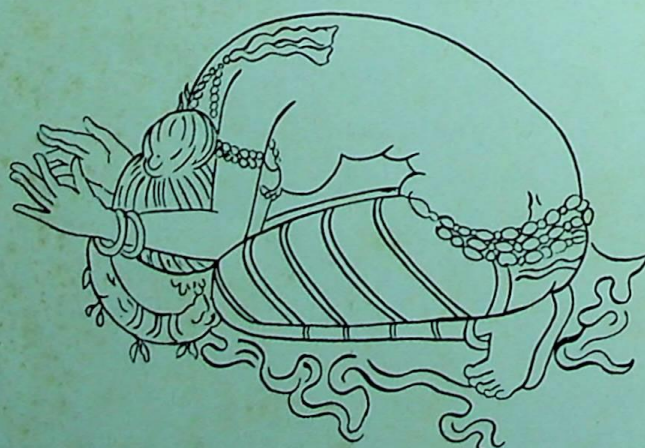
Did the art of Ajanta achieve its full flowering during the Gupta period? Perhaps it did, considering that Caves I and II and XVI and XVII are attributed to the fifth century A.D., and that the Vakataka kings, who are supposed to have built them, had intimate contacts with the Guptas. It is wrong, however, on this evidence to attribute their technique entirely to Gupta inspiration. In the treatment of the Jataka stories, in the disposition of the figures, in the mastery with which the artists are able to crowd the wall without cramping its space they are more akin to Amaravati. The suppleness with which the human body is treated is also southern in its inspiration.

We do not know enough about the history of the eight centuries—200 B.C. to 600 A.D.—during which period most of the Ajanta frescoes were painted. In Cave X alone four centuries are supposed to have elapsed between the first paintings on the left wall and the delightful renderings of the Shaddanta and Shujama jatakas on the right wall. What led to the decline in the power and poetry of the Ajanta frescoes in the sixth century A.D. will always remain a mystery. Whether it was due to the military convulsion which accompanied the fall of the Vakatakas and the rise of the Chalukyas' power in the Deccan or to the Brahmanical faith of the ruling dynasty—we can only guess. Moreover, the fact that there is often a marked contract in the plastic quality of works produced by different artists in the same period—many of the statues in the galleries of the Kailash Temple at Ellora, for example, lack the dramatic power of such a relief as the *Shaking of the Kailash by Ravana* though they must have been produced at almost the same period—should be a warning against any hasty conclusions. The rise of a new dynasty in the Deccan owing allegiance to a different faith by itself need not have caused the decay of the art at Ajanta if the artists of the sixth century A.D. had brought the same intensity of feeling to their work.

Time and apathy have dealt harshly with Ajanta and only a small part of the paintings on the walls of its chaityas and viharas remains to us today. But what remains is enough to show that it was an art created in response to a spiritual impulse, shared by the whole community, and that it was an art designed to shape human ends and to deepen men's communion with the world in which they lived. It was with some such thoughts that we left Ajanta hoping that one day we would return to it.

S. L.

The Sketches and Plates reproduced here are by courtesy of Education Department, Hyderabad and Deccan and Director of Archaeology, Hyderabad Deccan.





The Hunters watching the Bodhisattva and his herd (Shaddanta Jataka). Late 2nd Century B.C. Cave X



The Bodhisattva attacked by the Hunters (Shaddanta Jataka). The growth of Andhra painting. Excellent observation, earthbound and heavy, with little expression, but full of love for nature and life. Late 2nd Century B.C. Cave X



The Hunters watching the Bodhisattva and his herd (Shaddanta Jataka). Late 2nd Century B.C. Cave X



The Bodhisattva attacked by the Hunters (Shaddanta Jataka). The growth of Andhra painting. Excellent observation, earthbound and heavy, with little expression, but full of love for nature and life. Late 2nd Century B.C. Cave X



The Fainting of the Queen at the sight of the Tusks of the Bodhisattva (Shaddanta Jataka). The maturity of the Andhra style. Freedom and rich expression, first signs of elegance. Stands very near to the later Sanchi sculptures, though probably somewhat later. Late 1st Century B.C. Cave X.



Syama Jataka: First Episode, the Youth of the Andhra style, still near to Sunga art. Types similar to those on the Barhut railings, though later, good observation but faces conventional, movements clumsy, composition primitive. Late 2nd Century B.C. Cave X.

Dancing Girls, Singers and Musicians at the Bodhi Tree (left of this scene). The maturity of Andhra painting. Similar to the best sculptures from Sanchi. Early of middle 1st Century B.C. Cave X.



पुस्तकालय
गुरुकुल काँगड़ी







Frescoes of Ajanta

An Essay

by

Dr. Charles Fabri

Mr. Madanjeet Singh's sumptuous publication on the paintings of the Ajanta Caves under the high auspices of UNESCO* is so beautiful and so welcome that it would be ungrateful to pick a quarrel with the author; his colour photographs are truly lovely; the reproduction approximates the originals as closely as modern printing technique allows; there are plates that no newer invention could possibly improve upon; the size of the colour plates is as large as one can wish for; and even the price, though stiff for the pocket of an ill-paid Indian scholar or a meagrely rewarded intellectual, is not out of proportion to the value offered; thirty-two large colour-plates of fine paper.

But the introduction is brief, and surely quite inadequate. As the book is published simultaneously with English, French, Italian, Spanish and German text, it will, presumably, get into the hands of many art lovers whose knowledge of India, Indian art history and of Ajanta, to say the least, is far from adequate. Here was an occasion to invite an art historian with intimate knowledge of the art of Ajanta and an ability to express himself felicitously to collaborate with that great colour photographer, Mr. Madanjeet Singh, by writing a fine and inspiring introduction, with correct and up to date information; as well as captions for each plate that could have been more explicit than the four or five words now printed at the back of the plates. (These two blemishes, the lack of a good introduction and of good captions, could easily be improved upon in the next edition, as the first issue has been completely sold out, we are told).

In his introduction the author explains that these 32 plates do "not profess to be a comprehensive survey of the vast domain of Ajanta paintings". They could have been easily bettered even as "a broad outline". The choice is most restricted; almost all the paintings reproduced belong to a brief period of about one hundred years, though the paintings of Ajanta range over an expanse of time of a whole thousand. Some of the plates, naturally, are admirably chosen, and equally admirably reproduced. But when the number of plates

is so restricted, why print three Buddha-heads of exactly the same period, exactly the same poor quality, all from the latest times, mass-manufactured and uninspired? And why select Plate XV with one of those "Buddhas-by-the-dozen" panels, that cannot claim, by any standard, the remotest aesthetic merit? This plate is frankly ugly, a mass of repetitive hack-work Buddhas; and what a lovely plate could have taken its place!

Here and there one also grudges an enlargement of a portion of a plate. Such an enlargement must bring some new detail, some fresh revelation, not discoverable in the larger panel. But Pl. XXVII brings an enlargement hardly one-fourth bigger than seen in the previous print, and nothing that could not be clearly discerned in plate XXVI. When you consider that there is *not a single reproduction of any painting whatever from the third century B.C. to the end of the fifth century A.D.* in the whole publication, you will understand the sorrow and regret that such a wonderful publication, such a compliment to India, should have so restricted a selection. Some of the most beautiful paintings (e.g. the two "Botticellesque" chapel paintings) are entirely unrepresented; some of the loveliest feminine figures, so characteristic of the masters of Ajanta, remain forgotten; yet, by substituting four or five uninteresting plates, the book could have been so easily bettered!*

But all this is not Mr. Madanjeet Singh's fault. The literature on Ajanta has been compiled almost exclusively by archaeologists, and not by art historians. Those few art historians, all foreign, who have been writing passages of deep appreciation, like Binyon or Rothenstein, took it for granted that their Indian scholarly informers supplied them with correct dates and facts. They could not surmise that the entire dating of the mural paintings at Ajanta has been based on rather oversimplified and almost crude archaeological methods, investigations which brought results that do not bear examination for a moment.

The dating of Ajanta, hence, needs to be reconsidered. The work is enormous, and the following notes do not claim to solve more than a fringe of the problems; but they hope to clear the ground for further

*India: *Paintings from Ajanta Caves*. Preface by Jawaharlal Nehru, introduction by Madanjeet Singh. New York Graphic Society, by arrangement with UNESCO. (UNESCO World Art Series, No. 1). Price: Rs. 75/-.

*It is only after this article had been written that I read the criticism in the New York *Art News*. It is entirely identical with my criticism.

investigation by (1) demolishing a wrong structure of dating, based on fallacious foundations, and (2) pointing out methods of research that promise to be more fruitful and more reliable.

THE BASIC FALLACY

Abandoning for the moment a chronological treatment, I would like to start by quoting that admirable archaeologist, Mr. Ghulam Yazdani, whose great *oeuvre* on Ajanta is a monument of assiduous scholarship. Whilst expressing my profound admiration for this fine and fundamental *magnum opus*, I must be allowed to disagree with the learned author on a few of his conclusions. Mr. Yazdani discusses in good detail that famous panel in Cave I, the so-called "Persian Embassy" (as well as the so-called "Khusrau and Shirin" painting in the same cave), and quoting arguments *pro et contra*, explains that the view that these are Iranian themes, is based

"on the information given by the historian Tabari, that the fame of the king of the Deccan (Pulakesin II) spread beyond the limits of India and reached the ears of Khusrau II, King of Persia, who in the thirty-sixth year of his reign, A.D. 625-6, received a complimentary embassy from Pulakesin II. The courtesy was subsequently reciprocated by a return embassy sent from Persia, which was received with due honour at the Indian Court. The exact year of this return embassy is not given, but it must have taken place two or three years after the Indian embassy attended the Persian Court, so that the event may be assigned roughly to A.D. 630, and the painting of the scene on the walls and ceiling of Cave I to a still later date. This view becomes practically untenable when we compare the styles of architecture, sculpture, and painting of this cave with those of others which bear inscriptions; or again, if we take into consideration the fact that during the reigns of the early Chalukyas (A.D. 550-750) Buddhism, although professed by a considerable section of the population, gradually declined and Hinduism grew popular. Magnificent temples were at that time erected and dedicated to Vishnu, Siva and other members of the Puranic pantheon" (*Ajanta*, text vol. I, pp. 46 and 49).

This argument is completely fallacious, for it is based on a number of premises and inferences which do not hold good.

(i) One premise is that the paintings in a cave *must* date from the same time as the architecture and the sculpture of that cave. *This is an impossible and*

untenable "must". Paintings may not only be of much later date, but may even be palimpsests (overpainted over a previous painting without removing or after wiping off), such as occur actually (as is well-known and admitted by Mr. Yazdani himself) in the ancient Caves IX and X. Here the caves were excavated in the years approximately 250 B.C. to 100 B.C., but eight hundred and a thousand years later a good number of Buddha figures were added. Hence the date of the Persian Embassy panel cannot be ascertained at all by looking at the architecture and the *other* paintings in the same cave.

(ii) The second premise is that one or more inscriptions scattered here and there prove that *all* the paintings in that cave must necessarily date from the period of the inscription. This is entirely untenable again. The only solid fact that an inscription proves is that the piece of surface on which it is found existed at the time the inscription was incised or painted. As far as the painting in the next panel is concerned, it could have been painted fifty years, a hundred years, six hundred years later. Indeed, Mr. Yazdani knows that there are 19th and 20th century inscriptions in Caves IX and X, made by barbarous modern visitors; and he also knows that the inscription outside Cave X does not have the remotest reference to the 7th and 8th century Buddha pictures inside the same cave. In these chaitya caves the later additions are so admirably joined to the earlier paintings that it is only with the greatest care in inspecting them that the border of one can be distinguished from the other. *Inscriptions hence, admirable and important as they are, must be used with extreme caution and they help us only in a restricted area.*

(iii) The third fallacious argument is equally untenable. It is that painting at Ajanta cannot, according to this dialectic, date from the times of the Chalukya dynasty, because, the argument runs, the period saw the rebirth of Hinduism; and because, so the logic continues, the Hindus started building magnificent temples to their own gods, *ergo*, the Buddhists instantly ceased painting any further murals on their walls. This is a surprising argument in a country famed for tolerance and in which kings are known to have been generous towards several sects. The famous historical book by Kalhana, the *Rajatarangini*, tells us that Lalitaditya Muktapida II (700-732 A.D.) made splendid gifts for the erection of Hindu shrines, and yet found money to assist Buddhist monasteries to be erected, such as the great monastery at Huvishkapura (Ushkar, Varaha-mula, i.e. Baramula today), where



"The Persian Embassy" Cave I, Ajanta. c. 630 A.D.

he also paid for the erection of a Buddhist stupa and a Siva shrine next to each other.

Mr. Yazdani himself says elsewhere:

"The Chalukyas professed the Brahmanic faith, but in the beginning they were not only tolerant to the votaries of the Buddhist religion but emulated them in the styles of their rock-hewn architecture and painting" (*History of the Deccan*, vol. I, ch. viii, p. 56).

Why are we to take it that the "considerable section of the population" that according to Mr. Yazdani, professed Buddhism ceased their acts of worship and all donations dried up in the very year 550 in which the first Chalukya emperor ascended the throne? What is the meaning of this word "decline" in Buddhism, unless it is a slow and gradual process, a diminishing in the "considerable numbers" of Buddhists, taking many centuries before Buddhism becomes absorbed in Hinduism (and Jainism)?

Indeed, we have plenty of evidence on hand to ascertain how long this process of decline took.

When the Chinese pilgrim, Hiuan Tsang visited India in the second half of the seventh century, he found Buddhism flourishing everywhere, though he notes the decline here and there. Taxila, once sacked by the Huns, was again fully inhabited by the monks; and Ajanta which he visited, it seems, around the year

646 A.D. or so—that is, a full hundred years after the Chalukyas ascended the throne—was still inhabited by monks. He mentions several Buddhist monasteries in the Deccan "inhabited by thousands of monks". There must have been a vast community of active Buddhists to support so many monks.

As to Eastern India, where Hinduism was fast marching ahead in the 8th and 9th centuries, Nalanda and Paharpur were flourishing Buddhist centres, and much of the world-renowned university of Nalanda was built in the very period that may be described as the ascendancy of Puranic Hinduism and the decline of Buddhism. Kalhana tells us of Kashmir that Buddhist foundations were made as late as his own days, the 13th century. Buddhist communities survived as far away as Bukhara and Khorasan in the 13th century. And only at a short distance from Ajanta are situated the Buddhist caves of Aurangabad, some of which were undoubtedly erected in the 7th century, and again at a short distance away are the caves of Pitalkhora, also Buddhist, also within the borders of the Chalukya empire, where Buddhist paintings executed in the 8th century have been discovered.

Mr. Yazdani ascribes the dancing scene at Aurangabad in the Buddhist Cave VII to the end of 7th and the beginning of the 8th century; yet this cave is only 63 miles from Ajanta.

"It appears", says Mr. Yazdani elsewhere, "that for political reasons the monasteries and the temples at Ajanta lost their religious importance about this period (i.e. 6th century A.D.), although Buddhism survived at Ellora for another century, i.e. down to the close of the seventh century A.D. or even somewhat later" (*History of the Deccan*, vol. I, ch. VIII. p. 57).

This is logic difficult to follow when every indication at Ajanta points to paintings having been added up to the 8th century; and it is interesting to note that Mr. Yazdani does not draw the same conclusion even when a truly well datable painting at Ellora from the second half of the 8th century bears the most obvious resemblance to late Ajanta paintings. The Brahmanic deity riding a monstrous sardula in the Kailasa painting at Ellora, he says,

"bears striking resemblance, both in conception and treatment, to the heads of Boddhisattvas in the earlier (sic) paintings at Ajanta".

As these paintings in the Kailasa must be at least 750 plus A.D., it would have been far more logical to conclude that the Boddhisattvas at Ajanta must be near that date too. There is no known reason why they should have been two hundred years earlier.

There is, thus, not a single argument proposed to discredit the "Persian Embassy" and the "Khusrau and Shirin" scenes that can hold good on examination. Far from having proved that no painting can date as late as 630 A.D. at Ajanta, everything suggests that painting went on at a number of sites of the Buddhists under Chalukyan reign, for several hundred years; that Buddhists were numerous; that a Chinese pilgrim found Buddhist monasteries flourishing; that Hindu painters emulated their contemporaries in about 750 A.D. and later; and that whilst royal patronage declined, the faithful Buddhists continued to build and paint and excavate fresh caves at a number of sites under Chalukyan reign.

Internal evidence is also of enormous importance. Not only Cave I, but other caves too, point to extensive contact with Iran; servants of Iranian origin and with Persian dress are numerous; the wine-drinking scenes, in which all the participants wear Persian coats, Persian caps, high boots or socks and tight Persian trousers, shout at the visitor from ceilings, and ask for correct dating on the basis of comparison with contemporary Iranian art.

(iv) There is, however, one more argument, though not expressly advanced by Mr. Yazdani but by others, which runs like this: All the other paintings in these caves are Buddhist and religious in subject;

why, then, should this one "Persian Embassy" panel be a representation of a contemporary event? And why should *Buddhists* depict an event that had happened at the court of a *Hindu* king, who was not very much their patron?

With a little knowledge of human mentality and the psychology of temporizing priesthood, a plausible answer can be found.

It seems obvious that the monks and devotees of Buddhist faith had every reason to try and please the ruling king, *precisely because* he was not too generous to them. Priests and religious leaders of minority communities, in all countries and in all ages, are most punctilious in paying respect to Authority and protesting their loyalty—unless it is violently hostile to them. Now for the last 80 years or so, from the year 550 A.D., the Buddhists of the Chalukya dominions felt a gradual and growing alienation of the Court that had once warmly supported Buddhism. A great occasion, such as a visit from a far-away foreign country, gave them a welcome opportunity to show their loyalty to the Crown; an invitation to the distinguished foreign visitors to come and inspect their wonderful caves, a tactful surprise of a painting showing the embassy at the Court of the King (immediately on entering the first cave, mark you); what could be more politic, more prudent?

It is true that such paintings were not necessary in those "good old days" when the Court was Buddhist. It is exactly in these growingly unpleasant days of declining royal support that Buddhists have every solid reason to make a show of their loyalty and humble submission to the Crown.

There is, hence, not one valid reason why these wine drinking, high-booted, peak-capped, Iranians, this panel showing a Persian embassy, should be dated earlier than its most probable date: the middle of the seventh century A.D.*

Indeed, this is one of the most firmly established dates, though by no means the latest. There is no possible doubt that some of the latest additions, stiff, lifeless, rigidly standing Buddhas, must be contemporary with those in the caves of Pitalkhora, datable to the 8th century A.D. Such are some of the Buddha figures in the earliest caves of all, notwithstanding the fact that they were excavated in the third and second centuries B.C.

All these conclusions of the present author were reached during a visit in the summer of 1954; and now comes the last volume of Mr. Yazdani's *Ajanta*.

*The contention that it was not Pulakesin but another contemporary king who received this embassy, would make no difference in the dating.

vol. IV, published in 1955, in which my friend Dr. Bahadur Chand Chhabra makes public a recently discovered inscription of 12 lines, datable to the end of the 8th or the beginning of the 9th century A.D.

A more striking and dramatic proof cannot be desired in order to prove that art historic conclusions can be of more value than depending exclusively on the evidence of epigraphy; for had this inscription not been discovered during the clearing of debris, archaeologists would have been left with the last "ascertained date" of the Harishena inscription (not later than 475-500 A.D.).

We have, thus, written evidence that far from visualizing a sudden and steep decline in Buddhist patronage around the year 550 A.D., Buddhist patronage and occupation at Ajanta lasted some 350 years more; and 350 years is no small matter in the history of mankind or of art. This little matter of three hundred and fifty years will give the reader some idea how far the dating of Ajanta painting up to now has been off the correct path.

When, thus, the range of paintings in the Ajanta caves runs from the 2nd century A.D. at least to the end of the 8th century, it is, to an art historian, fantastic that serious people should talk of Ajanta as "classical". The paintings of Ajanta range from archaic beginnings to the ripe baroque; the majority of the paintings belong to the mannerist and the baroque schools; extremely few, indeed, can be dated in those two centuries that are purely classical, the 4th and 5th centuries A.D., the age of the imperial Guptas.

TWO ATTEMPTS AT DATING

There have been, as far as I know, only two serious attempts by art historians to sort out the various periods of painting in the Ajanta caves; one by Dr. Stella Kramrisch* and one by Dr. Hermann Goetz**).

Dr. Kramrisch, in her usual rather unintelligible and turgid style, distinguishes two main styles. This is the obvious distinction between the paintings in the two earliest caves (IX and X), which are before Christ, with one exception to be mentioned presently,—and the paintings in all the other caves, ranging from about 400 A.D. to the 7th century. The difference is enormous, and the distinction too obvious to need comment.

The one exception is a frieze painting in fragments in Cave IX which bears considerable

similarly to running designs at Amaravati; hence says Dr. Kramrisch, the painting of this cave may be dated to about the 2nd century A.D.

Without going into the merits of the comparison, I must point out that the carvings of Amaravati range over a period of some 400 years; parts go back, perhaps, as far as the 2nd century B.C., and it is quite fallacious to date all Amaravati to the 2nd century A.D., which is the latest century during which many works appear to have been carried out there.

When she comes to a discussion of the paintings in Cave XVI, she observes, briefly, that they are "not all the work of one phase", and even suggests that certain portions are as late as the paintings in Caves I and II (which she considers the latest of all). I happen to agree with these remarks of Dr. Kramrisch, who, unfortunately, has left them in this superficial manner, treating these important differences in what may be called an *aside*. There is no attempt to describe the exact differences in style, hence in date; though it is patently seen that Dr. Kramrisch's natural aesthetic sensitivity pointed in the right direction.

Dr. Goetz makes a more detailed attempt at dating on the basis of stylistic and formal changes, and, in fact makes the pioneer effort of distinguishing one panel from the other. Many of his conclusions are debatable; the basic attitude of this scholar, however, is correct, and some of his dates will be fully supported in this paper. He too dismisses inscriptions and architectural elements as no solid basis for dating the painted murals; but his nomenclature is thoroughly objectionable.

I do not understand how Andhra and Sunga art can possibly be called *classical*, in any sense; they constitute the most obvious *archaic* period in Indian art, slowly developing, generation by generation, towards that mastery of form, the classical mastery, that Roger Fry so aptly called "the conquest of realism". *Classical*, in Indian art history, can mean only the period of the Imperial Guptas, from about 320 to about 500 A.D.; already the 6th century brings in Mannerism, the 7th century is a clear step towards early Baroque, and in the 8th century India has a fully developed Baroque style.

Dr. Goetz tries to subdivide the early murals in Cave IX into three stages, 2nd century B.C., early 1st century B.C. and late 1st century B.C., though it seems to me, after living with these frescoes for sixteen days, that they show the development of a brilliant early painter within a few years. Neither do I believe that it is possible to accept as final Dr. Goetz's date for the fragmentary frieze of cowherds chasing

*Dr. Stella Kramrisch: *A Survey of Painting in the Deccan*. India Society, London, 1937.

**Dr. Hermann Goetz: *Neglected Aspects of Ajanta Art*. An article in MARG, II. 4 (1947).

bulls, which he would put at the end of 2nd century A.D. or the beginning of the 3rd, as they show some Hellenistic influence; that could easily be at the end of the 1st century B.C. or the beginning of the 1st century A.D.

But where Dr. Goetz makes serious attempts at distinguishing early Gupta ("Vakataka-Gupta" he calls it) and later work, corresponding to the inscription of Harishena (475-500 A.D.), and post-Gupta paintings, some of our conclusions will be found different and more precise.

THE TRUE GUPTA STYLE

Only a very small number of the paintings in Ajanta belong strictly to the Gupta period, the genuine classical style, the 4th and 5th centuries A.D. These, the finest compositions, are vastly different from the rather widely accepted notion of "Ajanta style"—the baroque romanticism, with the sinuously curving bodies, grossly exaggerated fingers, vastly elongated eyes, the endless mass of jewellery and the search for striking and unusually dramatic elements. All this sensuousness comes with mannerism and baroque; they are unknown to the classical period.

Compositionally the body of paintings in Ajanta falls into three distinct groups:

(1) *The second—first century B.C. paintings (Caves IX and X) are composed in a linear way; like in Bharhut or Sanchi, the picture is developed longitudinally, like a cross-bar of a torana, and the only division of this horizontal, long, ribbon, frieze-like treatment is here and there a tree, a building or a group of rocks, that vaguely define the end of one scene and the beginning of a second; and these natural devices belong, indeed, to both scenes; they go on, in a linear way, and almost all the personages are on one level. This is the typical archaic composition, which has many parallels in early Egypt or Greece, or in early Christian art.*

(2) *When archaic art develops, step by step, into the classical, the vision of a painting becomes much broader. In the fourth and fifth Centuries A. D. we have at least two whole walls—the most perfect examples of the superb achievement of Gupta Painting—in which the entire wall is treated as one area of vision, one single, grandiose composition. These are the two "Botticellesque" masterpieces in the right hand side-chapel of Cave II,* each wall a complete, undisturbed, large composition, born*

*The Hariti Chapel.

of a single vision; and the largest composition of all, the Simhala Avadana, the boldest and most grandiose painting in the entire history of Indian painting, covering an enormous wall with one single composition of unparalleled, powerful effect. (Cave XVII, right wall).

There are, besides these three panels, a few that belong almost to this group, and the story of Nanda (Cave XVI) belongs to only a slightly later date; but the transition towards mannerism is visible in the few paintings that may belong to the later Gupta period, still within the classical limits.

(3) *A marked break occurs in the sixth century, to which the majority of the murals in Ajanta belongs. The composition is broken up into compartments; the linear or the total composition of the first two groups gives place to a maze of little structures, pavilions, houses, verandahs, tents, balconies and even rows of shops, all confining within their pillars and walls little groups of compositions, one or a few figures, separated from the rest by pillars, walls and the like.*

The most striking thing about this sixth century plus compositional style, this compartmental treatment, in which the wall is like a maze of architectural designs, is that this is exactly the style that continues in Indian painting right into the 19th century. I am not talking of the Mughal court miniatures; but from the earliest Gujarati book illustrations onwards into the late 19th century hill paintings, nothing is more characteristic of Hindu and Jain composition than this breaking up of the area of the painting into structural, architectural pieces. The Krishna-Lila series would show a room here, houses and courtyards at the back, with numerous balconies, pavilions, chambers, verandahs, with sets of people, lovers, maids, messengers etc., divided into groups living and existing in small rooms allotted to them. Indeed, whenever you come across a Hindu miniature painting that fills an entire piece of paper with one single composition, without subdividing it, you may feel sure that strong Mughal-Persian influences are at work.

If, then, these basic compositional differences are so clearly observable and if they separate the truly classical portions of Ajanta murals from all the 6th-7th century panels, there must be additional proof that not only the basic composition but also other stylistical details support the dating of these panels into their various centuries and decades.



Fig. 1. "A Lady with a Casket" from *Simhala Avadana*, Cave XVII, right wall, right side, Ajanta c. 450 A.D.

This, in fact, is the case.

A careful examination of the classical panels—those of a unified composition, with no subdivision into compartments—shows that the figures display all the characteristics of classical art; the later panels show the development of mannerism and the unfolding of baroque features.



Fig. 3. "A Lady Votary" Cave II, left chapel, left wall, Ajanta 3.520 A.D.

Fig. 2. "The Wanton Lady" Cave XVII, Visvantara Jataka, Ajanta c. 400 A.D.

From well datable sculptural pieces Gupta art can be dated and observed. No Gupta image—of the 4th and 5th centuries—has elongated eyes; none show exaggerated poses, the Tribhanga pose being hardly developed at the end of the period; jewellery is most moderately used, and never on the Buddha*; fingers of men and women are normal in length, and not over-elongated; movement is used with dignity and restraint, in classical elegance, and all exaggeration is scrupulously shunned; even the posture of the head on the neck is carefully studied, and sentimentally bent heads are not known to Gupta sculpture—or painting.

Every one of these features is amply evidenced in the panels that are marked by their composition as classical.

The visitor examining the *Simhala Avadana* or the two superb wall paintings in the Hariti Chapel of Cave II, would look in vain for the so-called "Ajanta hairdress" of women. This fashionable idea is based entirely on the baroque period paintings in other panels. The women in the classical panels wear the simplest hair-do possible. All of them, have a simple bun, with a plain ribbon and a few flowers; all of them are identical in style, or almost identical. (In the later murals, every single woman has a different and highly elaborate head-dress, studded with pearls, jewels, ribbons, ornaments and flowers).

I give here two examples of the simple manner in which the hair of these women is dressed; in Fig. 1 "The Lady with the Casket" has the most naturally drawn eyes; she wears a single ribbon, the end knot of which is visible over the (proper) left shoulder, together with a single pearl necklace, one simple bracelet and one ring. This, indeed, from the *Simhala Avadana*, is the classical face. Noble, hardly bent, at rest, all the proportions perfect, nothing unusual to detract the eye from the main, elegant features. The fingers are not only not elongated, they are almost too short.†

Such are all the other figures in this superb classical composition. But whilst this is a bold and ambitious painting of enormous size—and enormous power—the Hariti Chapel pictures in Cave II are in a more gentle and restrained mood. The *Simhala Avadana*, after all, treats of war, of conquest, and the conquest of the Self; whereas the two panels in the right chapel of Cave II show lady votaries approaching respectfully a sanctuary, bearing gifts, and wending their way slowly towards the images of their deities

*Jewelled and crowned Buddhas come into vogue in the 7th and 8th centuries.

†These drawings were made on the spot by the author.

through a landscape of rock gardens. Fig. 2 shows the eyes and the head-dress of one of the votaries wending her way towards Mother Hariti. Unfortunately, much of the face is gone, but what there is left of this magnificent masterpiece is enough to show its dignified, unexaggerated, noble character. Here we have the unadorned beauty of classical Gupta art; a garland of flowers in the hair, a simple necklace, a face that in its calm repose is reminiscent of the finest work of Attic sculptors, or the madonnas of the cinquecento in Italy. So are also the poses of all the women; no twisted and over-slender waists, no bending of the body into contortions, no sinuous, serpentine curves. Not one of these eight beautiful women (on both sides of the wall) is drawn in the Tribhanga, "thrice broken," pose; indeed, *dignity* (the classical quality) is dominating, instead of *graceful charm* (the baroque characteristic).

Dithyrambs could be sung to extol the exquisite loveliness of these two panels, their superb composition, the admirable distribution of figures, the wonderful use of a few colours only to create a mood of elegiac peace, and calm, contemplative atmosphere; the gentle swaying of women, who, like figures in Puvis de Chavannes' frescoes in the Pantheon in Paris, move silently through sacred groves on a sacred errand. No wonder that Amrita Sher-Gil, with the unerring eye of a genius, found nothing more worth copying than this mural of unmatched beauty.*

The question of dating this lovely mural does not present much difficulty. That it is within the period of 320 (accession of Chandragupta 1) and 480 A.D. (Buddhagupta at Malva), is clear enough; but fortunately an even more accurate date is possible. One of the greatest sculptural remains of this Gupta era is a long architrave from the temple at Garhwa, District Allahabad, U.P., a relieve work of such outstanding merit that it seems astonishing that it should not be more often reproduced. The latest reproduction I know of is as old as the late Vincent A. Smith's article *Indian Sculpture of the Gupta Period*, published in the *Ostasiatische Zeitung*. It shows a large group of votaries, like our mural painting, slowly approaching, with gifts, again like our chapel fresco, a sanctuary. Distributed in delightfully arranged groups, some turning back to talk to a fellow-votary, some stepping forward, the procession bears the most striking similarity to the "Botticellesque" mural in the right chapel of Cave II, Ajanta. Perhaps there is in this relieve a slight increase in bending of bodies, a slightly

greater penchant towards attitudes; but the difference is that of a few years only.

Now the date of the Garhwa temple is known with considerable certainty. No less than five inscriptions have been found, all of the Gupta emperors of the fifth century, and the most likely date of this relieve frieze is 417 A.D. the date of an inscription of Kumaragupta 1. There are, of course, many other comparisons, but here stylistical factors are so important that the fresco of the votaries in the right chapel of Cave II can be dated with considerable approximation to about 400 A.D.

MANNERISM AND BAROQUE

Now if my contention that a composition broken into compartments, with a number of architectural elements such as verandahs, pavilions etc., must be later than the fourth and fifth centuries, is correct, then the mural in the opposite chapel (left hand of the shrine) in Cave II must show other elements of painting that prove it to be later in date. Indeed, the difference between these two sets of murals is remarkable, and is used in this article to demonstrate the soundness of a method of dating.

For the left hand chapel murals, on both sides, facing each other, in exactly the same position as the two murals in the right hand chapel, show the same subject; votaries approaching the sculptures at the end of this chapel, bringing their gifts. But what a difference in treatment!

The composition is broken into compartments that make the whole procession move, not in an idyllic landscape (as in the right chapel) but within a series of pillared verandahs, capped by balconies and turrets. Behind these pillars and within these compartments moves a thickly crowded procession, the number of people having been vastly increased, though the area of the mural is the same as in the right chapel. We now have thirteen figures densely covering every inch of space, in these crowded verandahs, and the balconies that top the lower structure, carry another three figures each. This is not a dignified procession, not a noble approach to a sacred fane; this is a crowd. Multiplication, as is known, is a characteristic element of all baroque.

They are also a different set of people. The innocent bareness of the noble ladies in the right chapel is replaced in this left chapel by a sophisticated crowd of smartly dressed belles. Jewellery and ornaments abound; the variety in the patterns of the garments is striking; strange and foreign habits are introduced by having booted, trousered, long-coated Iranian guards

*Karl Khandalavala: Amrita Sher-Gil. Bombay, 1944, Fig. 8, page 35. Neither this nor any 5th century work is represented in the UNESCO volume.



Fig. 7. "The Wanton Lady",
Cave XVII, Visvantara Jataka,
Ajanta c. 650 A.D.

at one end, and odd-looking priests (?) at the other, with a garment thrown diagonally across their breasts. One of the Iranian guards, standing at the rightmost end is a study in attitudinizing affection.

There is, as one may expect, a corresponding change in the treatment of the eye, the nose, the lips, the hair. Fig. 3 gives an example of these changes. The turn towards mannerism is unmistakable. The head-dresses are varied and fancyful; the eyes start getting longer, heavier and more romantic; the drawing of the

nose is striving at originality; that outstanding characteristic of mannerism and of the baroque. Indeed, the nervous and sensitive line, so carefully composed, of the right chapel murals is replaced here by what can only be described as facile, brilliant but superficial calligraphy. The lines are drawn in these left chapel murals with a verve that is astonishing; often the swing of the brush carries the artist too far, he corrects it with a second line, and then covers it, partially, when filling in the colours.

Finally, there is also an enormous difference in the colouring of these two chapels. The simple, sober, restrained tints of the right chapel have now been replaced by a large palette and rich colouring; many tints are used, heavy and dark blues and browns, and the sunny and primaver hues of the classical wall paintings in the right chapel are nowhere to be found in this autumnal painting in the left chapel. We are here in the first quarter of the sixth century, and the date I propose for these two murals, left chapel, Cave II, is about 520 A.D.

If, thus, it is evident that these two sets of murals placed in similar positions, within one and the same cave, are separated by more than a hundred years, the application of similar formal methods of examination will lead to reliable results in the case of other paintings, in all the caves. Whilst it is not possible within the limits of an article such as this to go deeply into details, or summon up datable sculptural comparisons in order to arrive at more accurate datation, a few examples can



Fig. 4. Woman with plain Hair
Bun, Cave XVI, Right wall,
Ajanta c. 500-510 A.D.



Fig. 5. "A Divinity worshipping
the Buddha", Cave XVI;
Verandah, Left wall, Ajanta
c. 600 A.D.



Fig. 6. "Crowned Male Personage",
Left wall, Cave XVII, Ajanta
c. 650 A.D.

be shown here in order to sketch the main features of the development from the fifth into the seventh century.

Fig. 4 is a fine example of early mannerist elements gently penetrating the stronghold of classical stylistic tastes. The hair-dress of this woman from Cave XVI (right hand wall) is still as simple as in the proper classical times; the eyes show the slightest mannerism, a gentle elongation and a first emphasis on the tear-drop corner; and the head is bent in unmistakable sentimentality. The little sketch below it shows another head from the self-same panel, classical in every respect, with not a touch of mannerism cropping up. In both examples the line is sensitive, carefully drawn, the eyebrows softly curving and one with several strokes of the brush; none of the facile line work of Fig. 3. One curl or two escapes from the well dressed hair, and on the shoulder one can observe the first sign of 6th century locks, hanging romantically. This panel must be dated to the period 500 to 510 A.D.

But what a difference when you look at Fig. 5!

This divinity worshipping the Buddha on the verandah wall of Cave XVI belongs to a different age, an age with a vastly different conception of what is beauty. Here the drawing is romantic, the eyes are elongated considerably, rich and varied curls fall on both sides of the effeminate, sweetish looking head; the personage wears a complicated and elaborate crown from which jewelled ornamentation escapes to fall on to the temple; and the hands are drawn with a delicacy and attenuation that characterize a romantic and aristocratic elegance. All the figures, as well as the composition to which these belong, are marked by this rich, voluptuous, mannerist world. The date must be around 600 A.D.

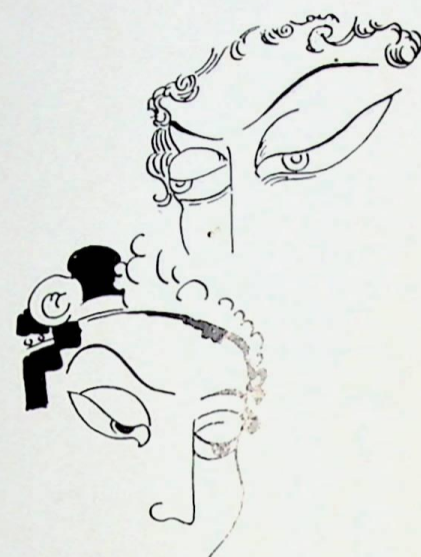
Fig. 6 is the logical sequence. We go from simplicity towards riches, from noble dignity towards an effect-catching exaggeration. This utterly effeminate head of a male personage is baroque in every respect. The grossly elongated eyes now make a sharp and fantastic tear-corner, the eyebrows are drawn with the utmost verve, almost meeting by the sheer bravado of the brush-stroke; the crown ends in numerous rows of pearl garlands hanging almost everywhere, jewels and ornaments bedeck the whole head. The hair of this male falls in romantic curls, and rows of locks fall on the shoulders; even the lips are exaggerated into a sensuous design. (Cave XVII, left wall, approximately 650 A.D.)

Fig. 7 is romanticism carried to its perfection. "The Wanton Lady", covered with rich and complicated jewellery, diadem, necklaces, pendant, ribbons, looks temptation itself; sensuous, delicious, flippant, flirtatious, she does not belong to the same class as the gentle



Fig. 9. Male Figure,
(Panel between cell
doors 4 and 5) Cave I,
Left wall, Ajanta
c. 700 A.D.

Fig. 8. "A Lady in
the Lumbini Garden"
Cave II, Left wall,
Ajanta c. 700 A.D.



Female from the same
Panel



Fig. 10. Crowned Buddha,
Cave I, Ajanta c. 800 A.D.



Fig. 11. Vaishnava priest attending
on King Pulakesin II, Cave I, Ajanta
c. 630 A.D.

noblewomen of the Botticellesque chapel mural; yet she too is a princess.* The elongation of her eyes, fantastically exaggerated, the naughty look from the corner of the eyes, the seductive charm of a smile that plays round her lips, the delicate, little fingers in the coy attitude; romantic sensuality and baroque love of dramatic poses find her perfect expression by a master of the baroque. (Cave XVII, Visvantara Jataka, about 650–675 A.D.)

To what baroque exaggeration a love of the unusual can lead is best demonstrated in the following two copies, Figs. 8 and 9.

In Fig. 8, from Cave II, "A Lady in the Lumbini Garden", the difference between males and females has disappeared. The hair is a maze of inventions, the "conceit" of every facile line is obvious; the eyebrows now curve up in a surprising peaked arch, the drawing of the eyes is verging on the devilishly absurd. As to the lips, they are not those of one brought up in the moral restraint commanded by the Dhamma of the Buddha; these are sensuous lips, meant to kiss. Here is ripe baroque dramatization, effect-catching exaggeration, the desperate search for unusual, striking effect. The date must be around 700 A.D.

Fig. 9 gives two examples of similar late work in Cave I, left wall. The top drawing is an accurate copy of a male head, the one below is a female. The difference is hardly noticeable, both are effeminate, both full of ringlets, curls, locks, jewellery; both have absurdly exaggerated eyes, with tear-corners and eyebrows and heavy upper eyelids that are a world apart from the simpler work of the 5th century and a further debasement of the 6th century style. In this and similar contemporary panels the attention and inventiveness bestowed on hair-dresses is one of the distinguishing signs of true baroque. The date is 700 A.D. or a decade later, and corresponds to the contemporary terracotta sculptures found at various places in late Buddhist sites: Ushkar in Kashmir is almost identical, with the high eyebrows that the Master of Ushkar introduces there (date of the Master of Ushkar: 700–732 A.D.)†

THE CROWNED BUDDHAS

There are, in this short preliminary study, two more points that I would like to raise, both tending to prove how late some of the paintings in Ajanta are. One is the occurrence in the "Persian Embassy" of a

Vaishnava Brahmin (never noticed before as far as I know), and the other is the occurrence of crowned Buddha figures.

Now the story of the crowned form of the Buddha is not very difficult to ascertain.

No one in his senses would have dared to show the fully enlightened Buddha with any jewellery, let alone a kingly crown, during the classical times. Everyone was fully aware that the Buddha discarded all these earthly vanities when he had left his kingdom, cut off his hair, handed over his jewels to Chandaka, his groom, and went in search of perfect wisdom. From the time that the Buddha image was created (end of 1st century B.C.) he was always shown either completely shaven (Mathura) or with some kind of head-dress that varied from Hellenistic, Apollonic looking wavy hair to a large number of small curls; and the latter became the canonically accepted form in later centuries.

As I have repeatedly pointed out, last in my article on the Ushkar and Akhnur terracottas*, the irresistible desire to cover everything with ornaments that grew up with the development of baroque taste demanded that even the Enlightened One should have some ornaments. As far as I know, no one has ever published an earlier example than the present author. It is a Buddha figure, fully draped in the classical robe, wearing a jewelled necklace (this illustration, unfortunately, was not published with my article on the Akhnur terracottas). Also from the same area come two examples of Buddha-heads, both wearing a modest pearl crown; evidently the first, half-hearted attempt at a departure from the simplicity of the 5th to 7th century. All these three examples can be dated with absolute certainty to the period 700 to 732 A.D.

In Bengal fully crowned Buddha figures appear under the Palas, considerably later, and there are a large number of them both in stone and bronze. Most of them date to the last centuries of active Buddhism, 10th to 12th centuries A.D. They are amply in evidence in the overseas of Buddhism, Cambodia, Burma etc.

Style, and the attitude to what is considered the acme of beautiful appearance in an age, are of supreme importance in such matters. The growth of a Mahayanist literature, in every way parallel to the style of the fine arts, also proves that the fantastic development of an enormous Buddhist pantheon, with multiplied Buddhas, multiplied Bodhisattvas (first there was, of course, only one single Bodhisattva), gods and goddesses, in all colours ("Yellow Tara", "Green Tara"

*It is noteworthy that in Sanskrit drama the seductive hetaera becomes important in seventh century.

†MARG, VIII, 2, (1955).—Compare also C.L. Friberg, in JRAS. London, July 1931. The date should read "6–7" century."

*MARG, VIII, 2, 1955. See also the author's article, "Buddhist Baroque in Kashmir", in Asia, October 1939 (New York).

and the like) came in the 7th century A. D. The deification of the Buddha did start earlier; but it is only in the full growth of Mahayana, profoundly assimilated to Hindu religion, that the Buddha takes on attributes of Vishnu, whilst his very important novel counterpart, the Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva (Padmapani) begins to resemble more and more the conception of Durga, even to the point of having the same lion for his *vahana* (vehicle). (Later, this Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva is actually turned into a goddess).

No crowned Buddha is known to exist earlier than the first two decades of the eighth century. Even though it is possible that the examples discovered by me are not the first ones, they must be very near to the beginning. The very fact that the jewellery given to the Kashmir Buddhas is so little, so modestly introduced, speaks for a very early attempt, a half-hearted introduction, step by step, of a daring innovation. I doubt if anyone will ever discover a Buddha with jewellery much earlier than 700 A.D.

To find, then, that we have a mural painting of the Buddha in Ajanta with a complete crown, is striking evidence that painting at Ajanta continued at least to 700 A.D., probably 30 or 50 years longer.

The painting is the famous "Temptation of the Buddha" in Cave I. Hardly noticeable in reproduction, and summarily dismissed as some kind of effulgence by Mr. Yazdani, the accurate copy here reproduced (Fig. 10) made by the author on the spot—shows clearly that a half-hearted, not fully developed attempt has been made to crown the Buddha. The crown is small, and is not covering the ushnisha, it is placed, shyly, behind it. But it is made of gold and precious stones; it is a crown.

I am convinced that this picture cannot be dated earlier than 720 A.D.; and though I admit the possibility that the crown is a later addition, this can only be ascertained by the use of powerful magnifying glasses which I did not possess. But I examined the painting with every care possible, standing on a high ladder, and it seems to me that the painting and the crown are contemporary; and if the crown is an addition, it would only prove that in about 720 A.D. someone cared enough to have a painting changed. There were painters still working in 720 A.D. at Ajanta. *Quod erat demonstrandum.*

And now to return to our point of departure. The "Persian Embassy" painting, also in Cave I, must, surely represent a court at which Vaishnavism was prevalent. There is not a single Buddhist monk present, mark it, but standing near the throne is a Vaishnava priest, never noticed properly by previous writers, and

unknown to other paintings.* He wears one of those typical red cloth caps that have two flaps hanging over the ears, still worn in the neighbouring Maharashtra by the Vaishnava priests. I give with this article an eye-copy, made on the spot. Fig. 11 showing the skull cap with flaps, the bead necklace. The painting shows a curious blue-grey shade under the upper eyelid, a strange little manner that occurs only in this panel and in one more, a picture of the apotheosis of the Buddha supported on a mighty lotus stalk (also unknown before the seventh century). This kind of treatment of the eye, as well as the entire painting of the "Persian Embassy" belongs to a different kind of hand; it looks as if this panel had been painted by an imported artist, perhaps a painter from the Court of Pulakesin? Be that as it may, the presence of the only Vaishnava priest near the Indian king is one more powerful argument that this painting does, in fact, represent a contemporary scene, made at the Court of a king who was not Buddhist.

I cannot leave the question of the crowned Buddha, however, without a reference to a late sculptural representation of utmost interest. Near the entrance of Cave XIX, to the right of the porch, is a panel, reproduced here in a photograph, Fig. 12. Unfortunately, due to the heavy shadow on top, the most important detail is not as clearly visible as one would wish, but clearly enough to prove that two little *ganas*, heavenly dwarfs, are floating above the head of the Buddha, holding over him a magnificent, highly ornate crown.

Here then, obviously, we have an example of the arrival of the crown, shyly, by the backdoor, as it were, not yet placed on the head of the Master, but held aloft by two angelic little creatures—curiously similar to Christian iconography where this shy entrance of a crown, suspended by two angels above the head of Christ, is also found. Not ready yet to place the crown on the Buddha's head, but far too enamored of the idea of approximating the Buddha to Hindu deities wearing *mukutas*, the artist took recourse here to this device. The date must be very near 700 A.D., or just after it.

Not only painting, but sculpture too continued, thus, at Ajanta into the seventh century. The little detail in Fig. 13 is a portion from the highly ornate triforium inside Cave XIX, painted in brilliant colours; and anyone who knows what baroque means can see at once that everything around the preaching Master is ripe baroque the rich scroll-work, the elaborate framing of the panel, the flying figurines in the corners.

*There are Brahmins, of course, as in the *Visvantara Jataka*, but not Vaishnava priests.



Fig. 13. Part of triforium with baroque ornamentation, highly painted, Cave XIX, Ajanta.

CONCLUSIONS

The traditional dating of Ajanta needs considerable correction, and much more study. Stylistical examination, as well as recently uncovered inscriptions, now prove that far from having been completed in 550 A.D. both sculpture and painting continued into the early eighth century at least.

Certainly very few of the panels at Ajanta belong to the classical period, i.e. 320 to 500 A.D.; though these few include the best two mural paintings that Ajanta, or for that matter India, has given the world, the two large frescoes in the Hariti Chapel, right side, Cave II.

The majority of the paintings belong to the Mannerist school, and after that to the Baroque period; the ideals of beauty and the aims of the artists in these centuries (sixth, seventh and eighth centuries A.D.) are vastly different from those of the classical painter.

A great deal of formal and stylistical research remains to be done. The present study is a brief summary of some of the findings of the present writer; but a careful examination of such details as the shape of the eye, the treatment of the hair-dress, the costume (fashions change) and the manner of face and figure and hands, for example, yield wonderful results, and some of those communicated here are examples of the immense difference in style between one century's work and that of another.

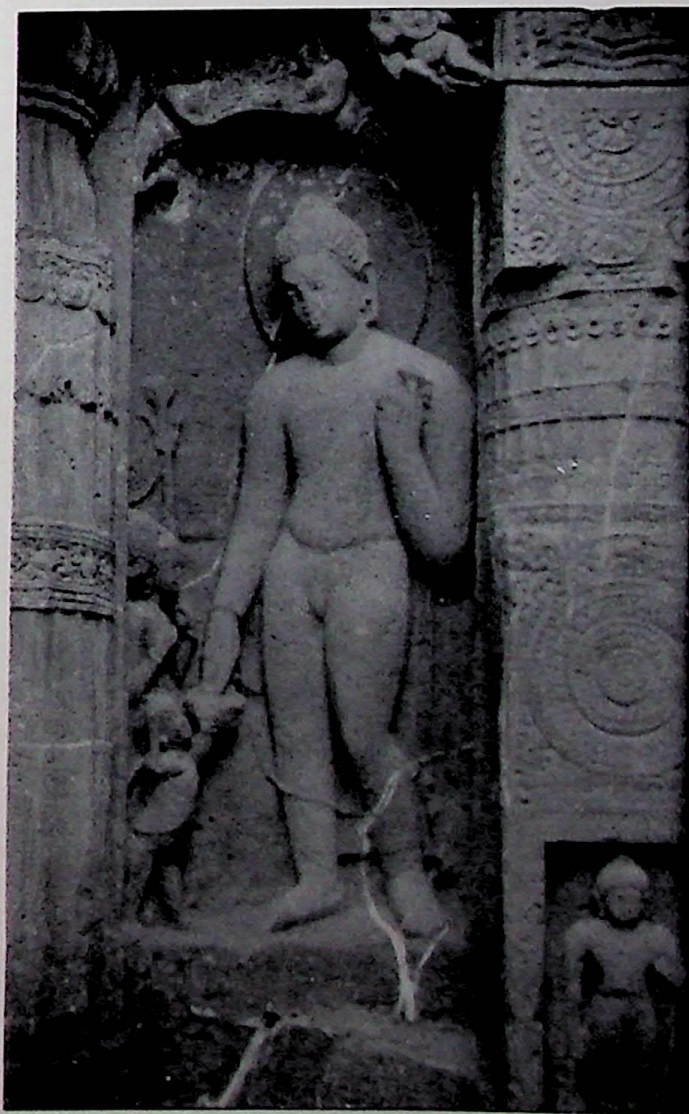


Fig. 12. Cave XIX on right of entrance, outside Ajanta.



"Votaries approaching a shrine with offerings." The Hariti Chapel, Cave II Ajanta, c. 400–410 A.D.

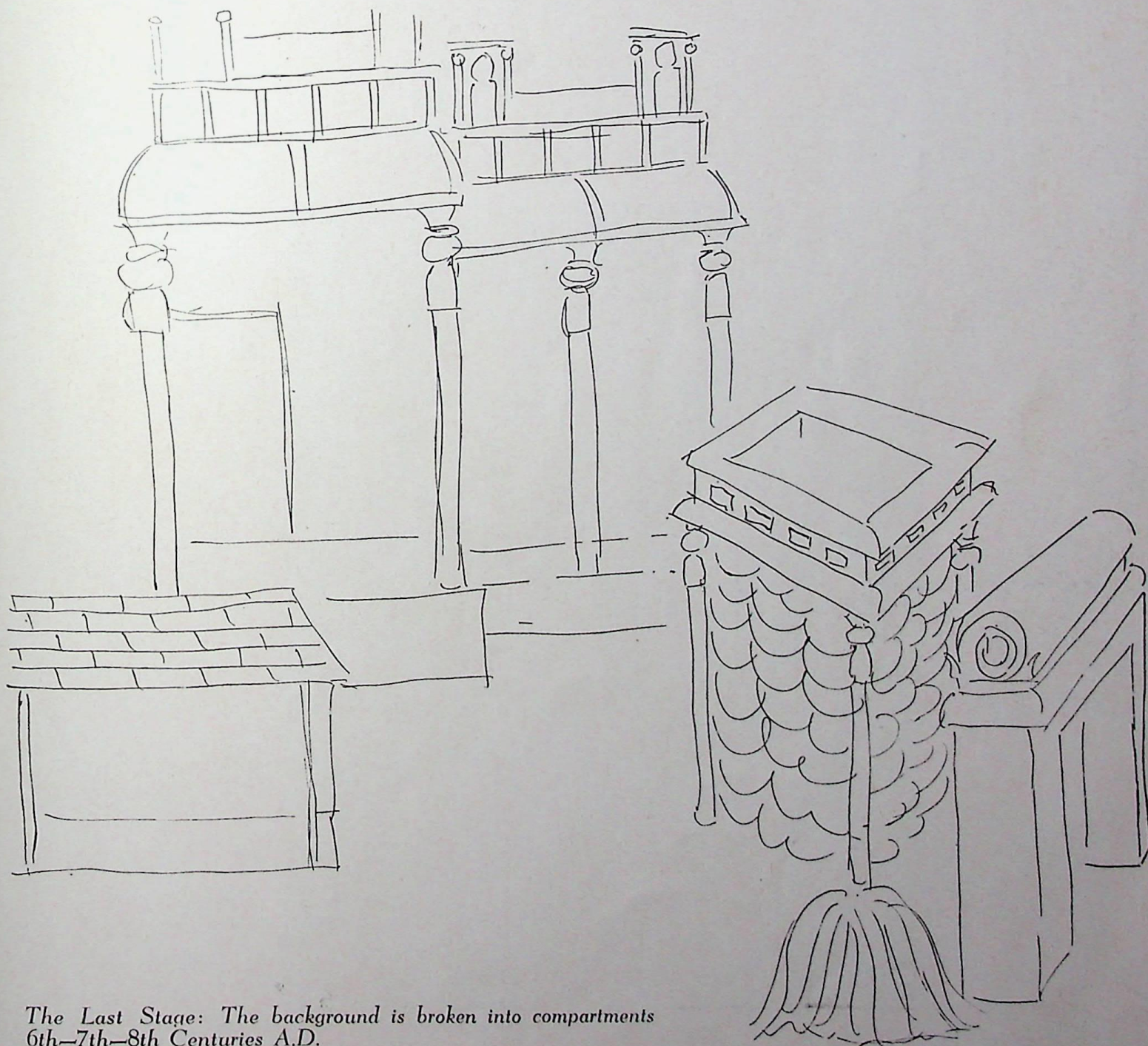
Though the author hopes to publish his studies in a more ample form, these notes should suffice to prove that the old dates given by previous students of Ajanta cannot hold good. Ajanta art continued not only at the same time as Aurangabad and Ellora, but even later. Indeed, as the oldest Gujarati Jain manuscript illustration published by Dr. Norman

Brown goes back to the ninth century A.D., we now have a truly uninterrupted history of painting from the third century B.C. to the present day. The last paintings at Ajanta were made when in neighbouring Gujarat, Jain illustrators were busy limning their book illuminations.

Delhi, September 1955.



The First Stage: Ribbon Composition—2nd Century B.C.



*The Last Stage: The background is broken into compartments
6th-7th-8th Centuries A.D.*

Reference to YAZDANI's Ajanta albums.

Volume IV.

Plate XX

(a) A Princess: Visvantara Jataka. This is a remarkable approximation to the Gujarati Jain miniatures, with eyes bulging out, violently sharp nose, and living in a little compartment; even the textile motif is not far from 9th-10th century Jain miniature book illustrations.

(b) Jujaka received the Ransom. The dramatic effect, the individualism, the striving after novelty; typical baroque elements. Even ugliness is used, only to relieve monotony. These two are from the same wall and the same hand as my Fig. 7, "The Wanton Lady", 650-675 A.D.

Volume I.

Plate XXVIII

The Temptation of the Buddha by Mara. Showing superimposed crown.

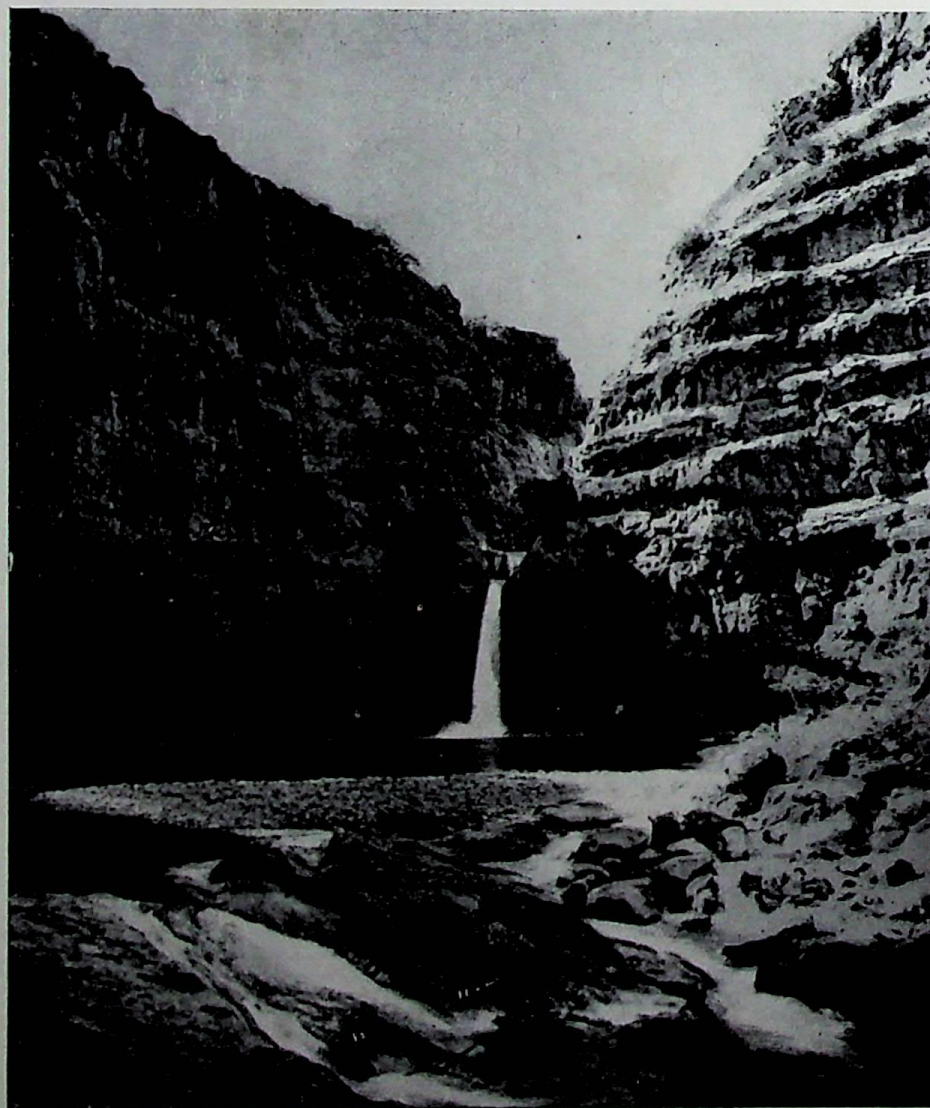
half hidden by the Master's protuberance; the exaggerated curves and thrice broken sinuous bodies of the women suggest at least the 7th century; the attempt to show horrible monsters among the devils, with great inventiveness and originality, all point to a date around 675 A.D.; the crown, however, must be nearer 700 A.D. The textile patterns are identical with those in the Visvantara Jataka, which is dated 650-675 A.D.

Volume I.

Plate XXXIX

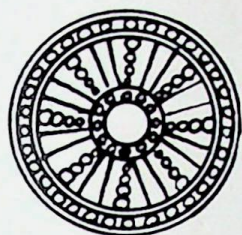
(a) A Bacchanalian Scene: Khusrau and Shirin.

Typical Iranian panel from the ceiling of Cave I, in which the "Persian Embassy" panel is painted. The Sasanian elements suggest that the Ajanta painter worked from an existing painting (or chased silver dish?). Approximate date: 630 A.D.



Ajanta Water-fall

Some motifs from ancient Indian jewellery



The jewellery of the early periods of Indian civilisation reveals a symbolism, which seems to be clearly derived from non-Aryan, pre-Vedic and archaic origins.

In primitive society of the pre-historic periods, jewellery was an extension of the magical rights by which early man and woman conquered the prodigal nature around them. In those times, therefore, adornment was not restricted entirely to the female, but played a very important part in equipping the male to absorb the spirits and to tantalise the opposite sex. The propitiatory rights, through which skulls, bones, feathers, paints, flowers, leaves, cowri-shells and sea-shells, became part of costume, have deep and intricate ritualistic connections, specially among the original neolithic inhabitants of India, the Dravidians. Apart from the charms and amulets, which supplied the main motifs for jewellery in India, the attempt to cover the human body with the least little clothing, desirable for a warm climate, played no inconsiderable part in the development of jewellery as adornment.

The techniques of agriculture, and familiarity with leafage and flowers, seems to have influenced the aesthetic sense and design.

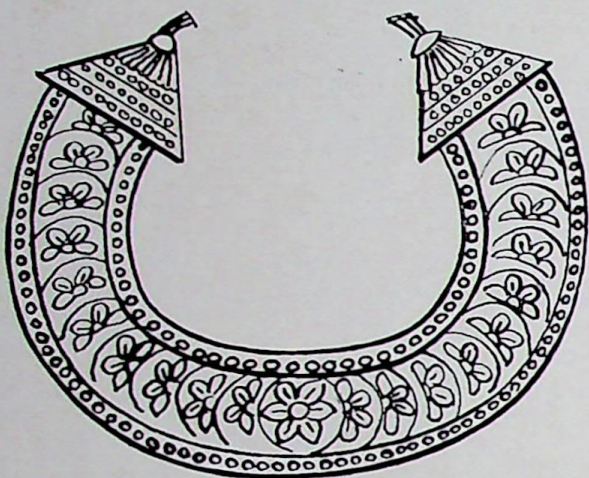
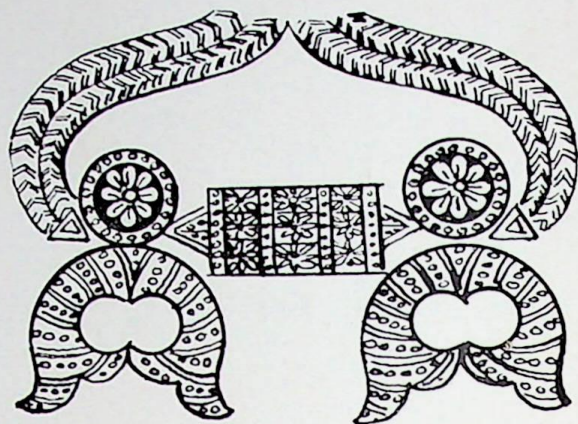
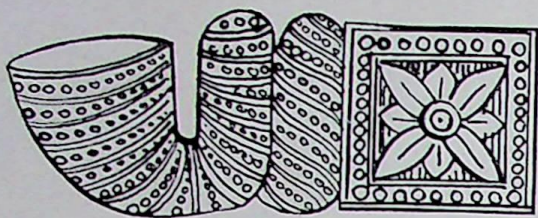
All these motives, based on magic, superstition, religious ritual and mythology, were pooled together by the dynamic and growing societies of India before the Mauryan period, foreign influences were absorbed, the value of silver and gold and precious stones, appreciated, and superb heights of workmanship and design were achieved, as is evident from the earliest medallions and reliefs at Barhut and Sanchi, Bhaja and Kondane, Ajanta and Amaravati.

In the main, the designs of jewellery, evolved in the 1st century B.C., have not been substantially altered in India during the last 2,000 years.

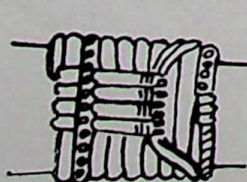
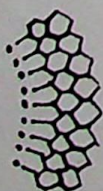
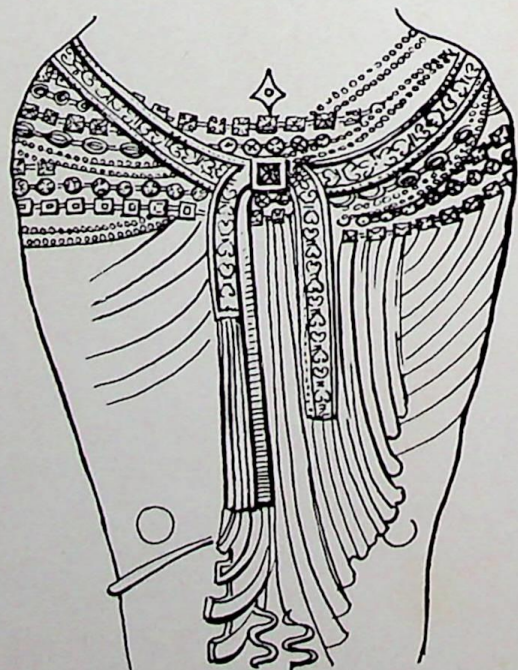
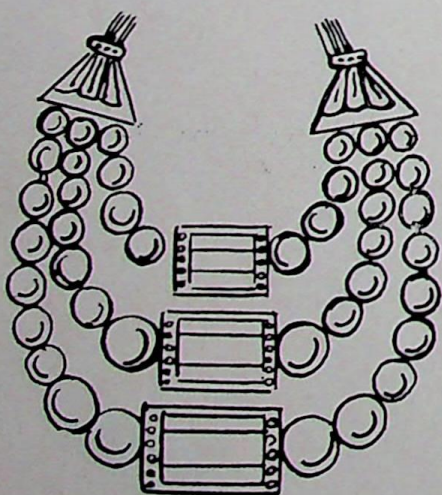
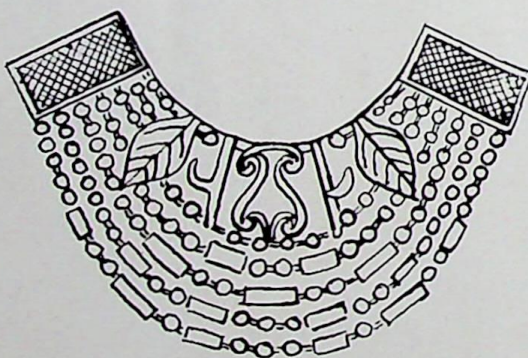
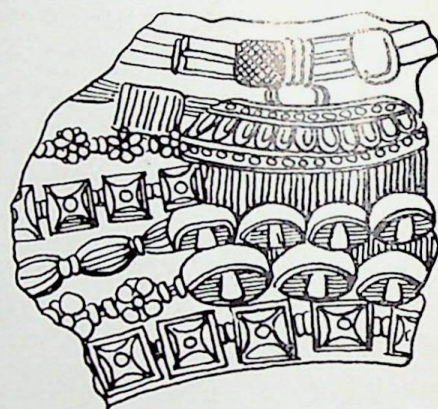


*Ornamental Head-Dress; Figures in Bhaja Caves
(1st Century A.D.)*





Jewellery from Sculptures at Barhut



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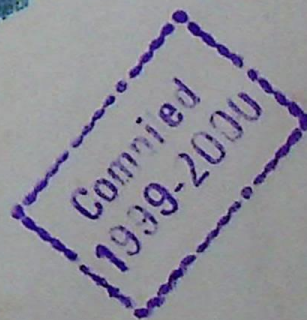
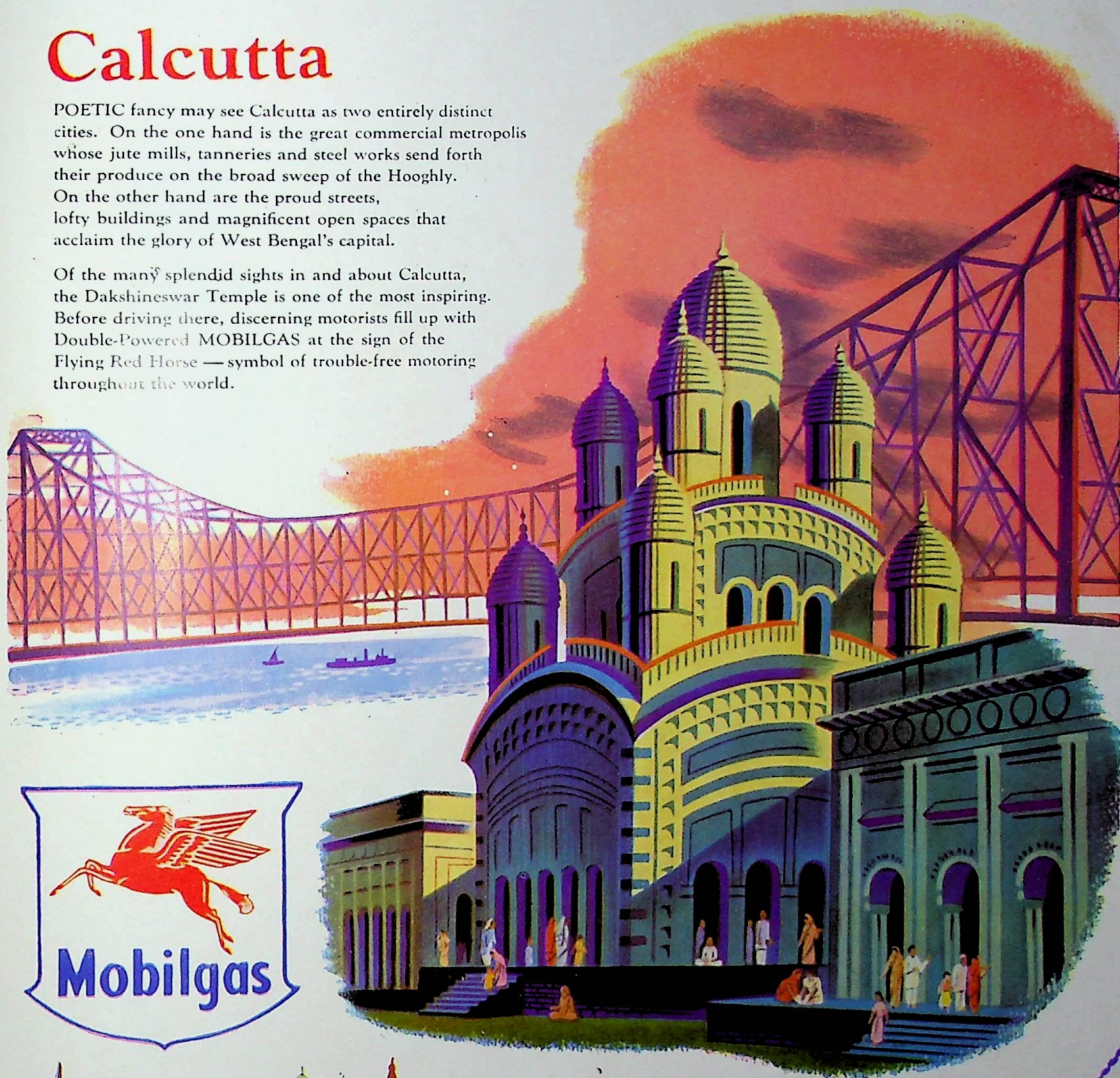
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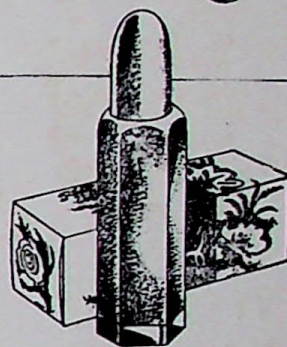
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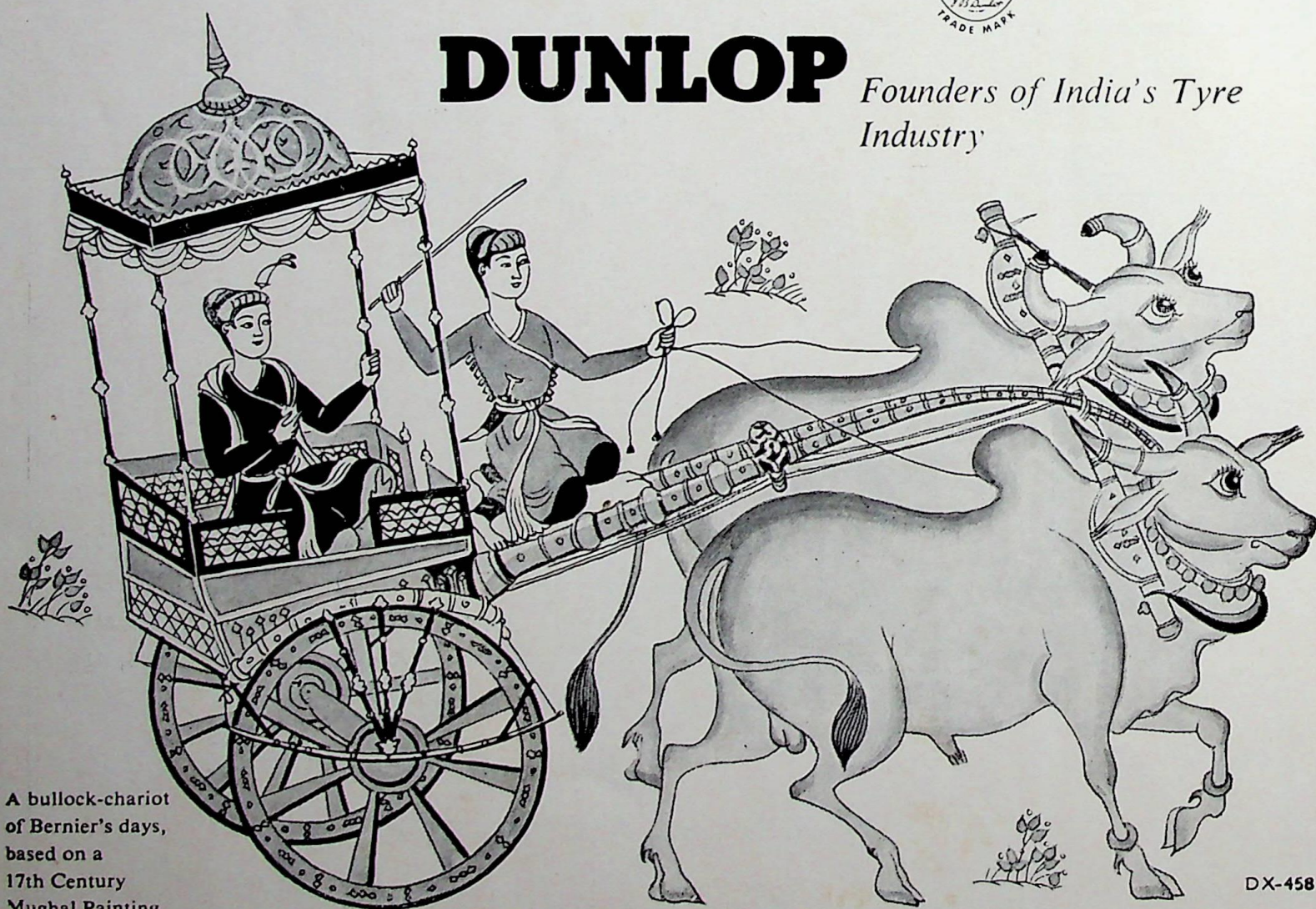
As a court physician Bernier had the unique opportunity of observing at close quarters the social, political and economic conditions of the period. He has left behind an intimate account of his travels, that brings back to life those stirring days of internecine wars heralding the downfall of Shah Jehan and Aurungzeb's rise to power.

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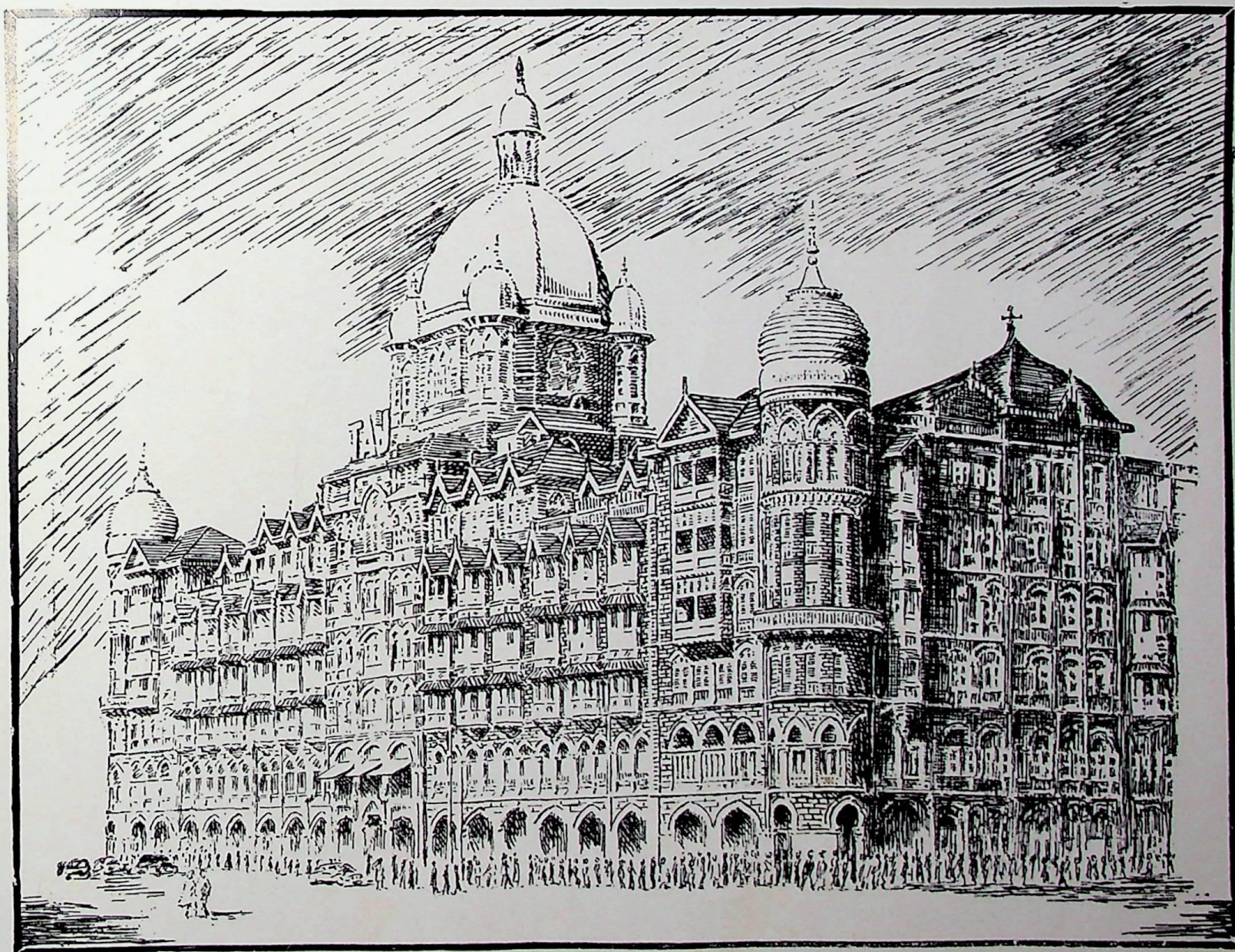
A bullock-chariot of Bernier's days, based on a 17th Century Mughal Painting

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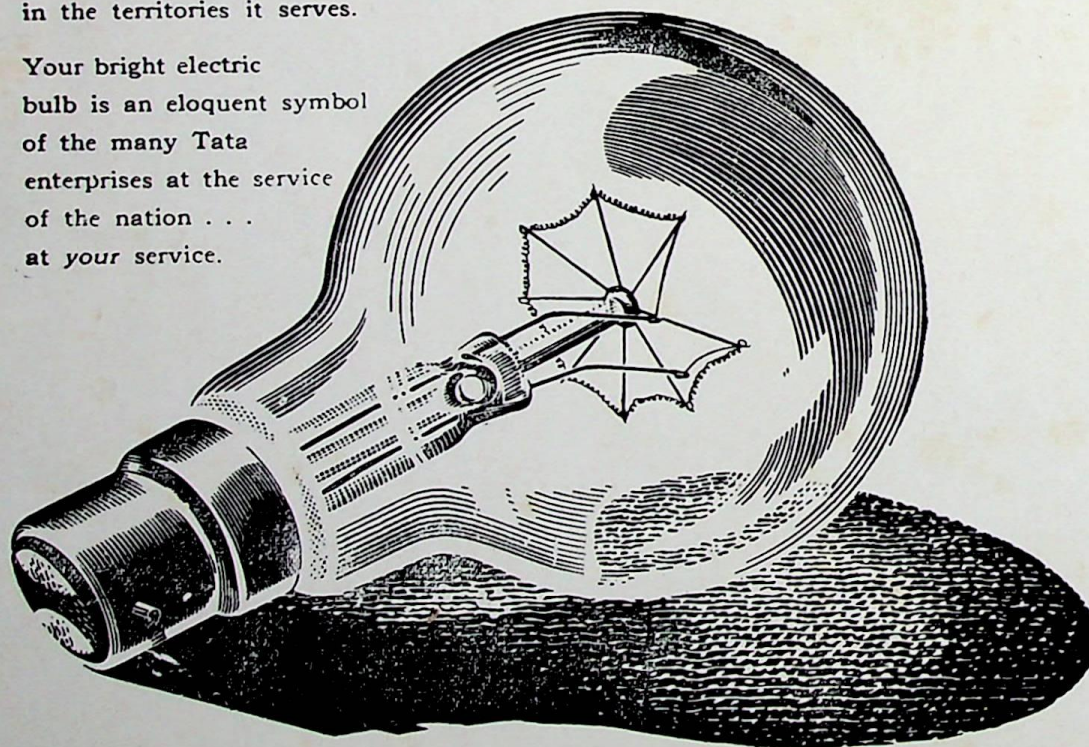
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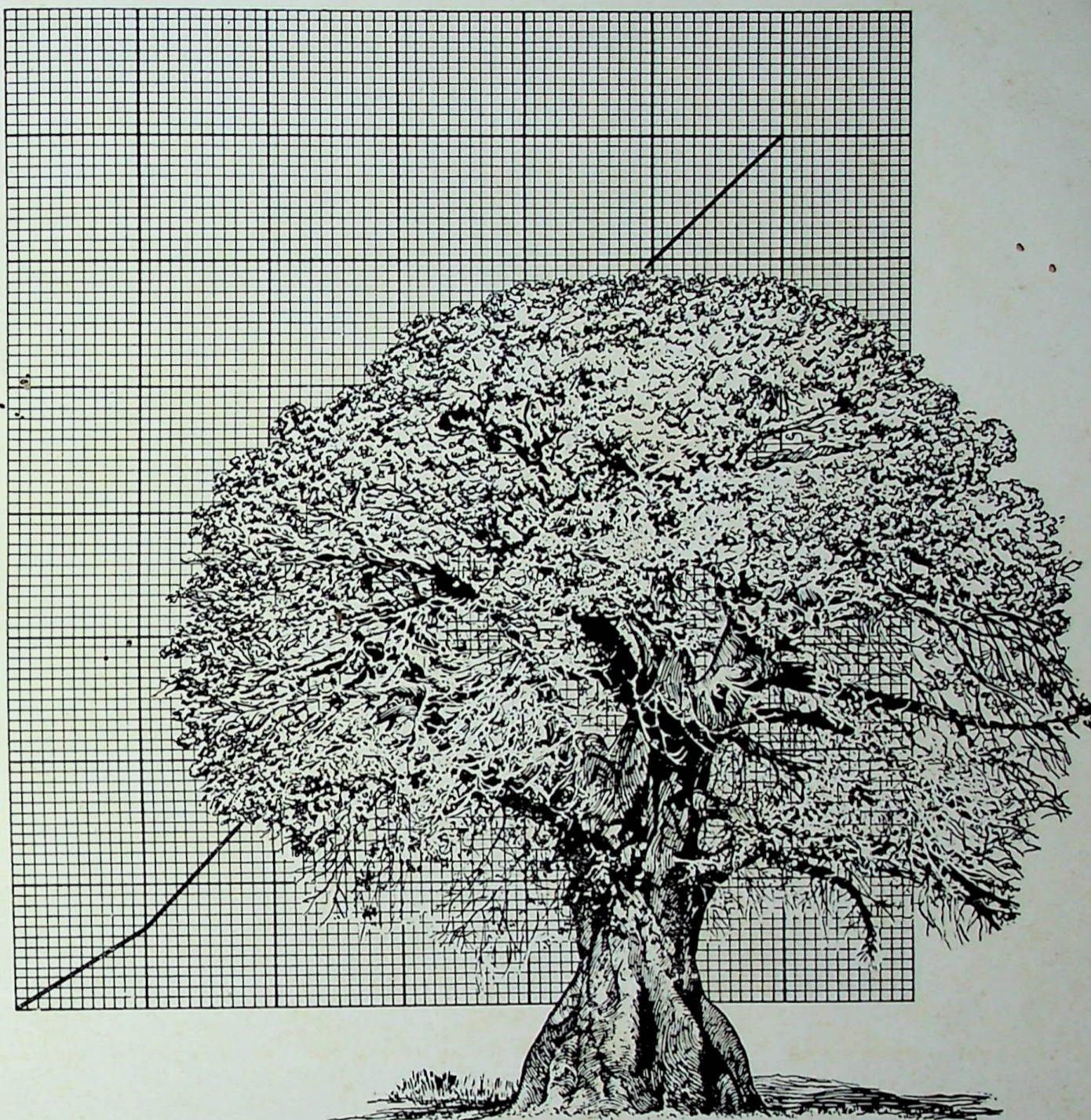
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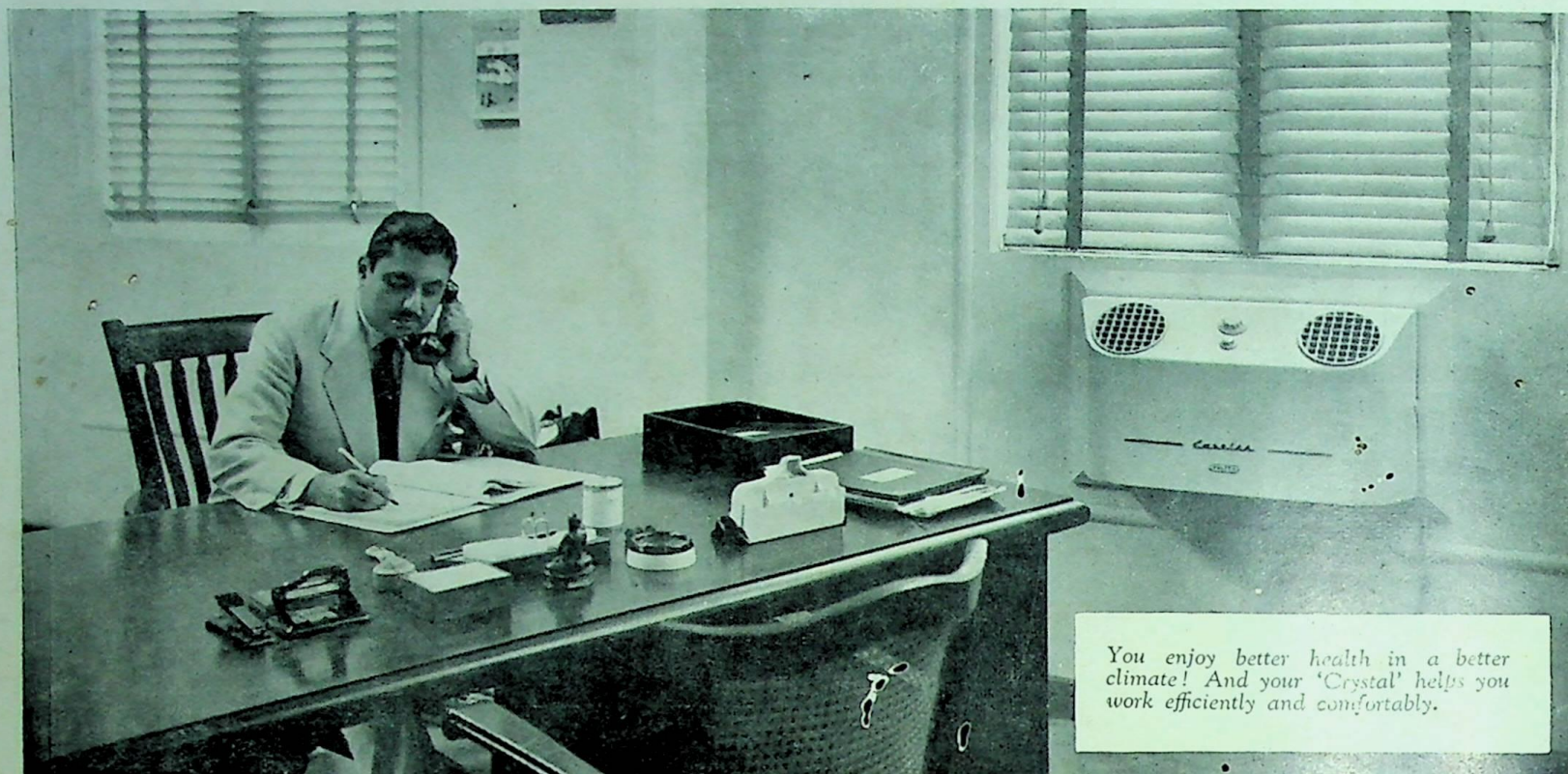


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